THE FACTS OF LOURDES
&
THE MEDICAL BUREAU

Dr A. MARCHAND

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BY

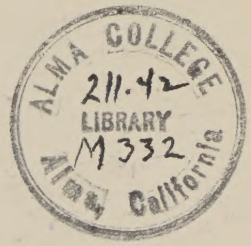
DR. A. MARCHAND

PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL BURRAU AT LOURDES

TRANSLATED BY

DOM FRANCIS IZARD, O.S.B.,

M.R.C.S. ENG., L.R.C.P. LOND.



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To His Lordship

MGR. SCHOEPFER

Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes

In Token of Respect and Gratitude

LETTER OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO HIS HOLINESS

No. 20,617] THE VATICAN,
July 26, 1923.

DEAR DOCTOR,

Our holy Father Pope Pius XI has graciously deigned to accept the gift you have made him of your recent work entitled "The Facts of Lourdes and the Medical Bureau."

Your position fully enables you to judge of the value of the Medical Bureau, to estimate the rôle it plays at Lourdes, and to make this known to the public.

This work, as accurate and sincere as it is able, is another incontestable authority bearing witness to the glory of the Immaculate Virgin, and the benefits bestowed through her.

The Sovereign Pontiff thanks you for the gift, and its accompanying filial sentiments, felicitates you on your work at the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, and willingly accords you his paternal and apostolic Benediction. With my personal thanks for the copy you have also sent me,

I remain, my dear Doctor,
Yours sincerely in Christ,
P. CARD. GASPARRI.

TO DR. MARCHAND,
Vice-President of the Lourdes Medical Bureau.

LETTER OF MONSIGNOR SCHOEPFER, BISHOP OF TARBES AND LOURDES

Our Lady of Lourdes,
September 29, 1922.
(*Feast of St Michael the Archangel.*)

My dear Doctor,

I am late on account of my heavy work—as you see, I accuse and excuse myself at the same time—in thanking you for the delicate attention of dedicating to me your work entitled *The Facts of Lourdes and the Medical Bureau.*

I wished also before writing to you to read this work, being convinced that I should have to add to my thanks the most sincere felicitations. To-day I give myself this double pleasure.

Your readers, and they will be numerous, will, like me, hasten to congratulate the Doctor who joins to professional knowledge clearness of exposition; in the examination of the sick, and of those cured, acts conscientiously and scrupulously, combining with a critical spirit enlightened faith and virile piety.

The merit of all this is enhanced by being set forth concisely and in good literary style.

I can and ought therefore to call the attention of the Faithful to your work, recommending it at the same time to all lovers of the truth. Whilst I was writing to you, there fell at that moment from

Heaven, as it were under the auspices of the Archangel, a splendid postscript, which I am, as it were, the angel messenger to convey to you.

His Holiness Pope Pius XI in his paternal goodness, moved also by his filial and deep devotion to our Lady of Lourdes, has deigned to address me a Brief, by which he does us—I say "us" deliberately —the honour to name you a Knight of the Order of St Gregory.

This is the highest praise that could be bestowed upon you and your work. There is no need for me to add a word to this witness of your merits. With most cordial congratulations,

Believe me, my dear Doctor,

Yours affectionately and devotedly,

✠ F. Xavier,

Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes.

To Dr. Marchand,
Vice-President of the Medical Bureau at Lourdes.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

"THOSE effects are rightly to be called miracles," says St Thomas Aquinas, "which are wrought by Divine power apart from the order usually observed in nature" (*Contra Gentes*, L. III, c. 102).

To demonstrate these inexplicable cures which undoubtedly do occur at Lourdes is the *raison d'être* of the Medical Bureau.

Were there no medical examination and enquiry, all sorts of spurious cures would be circulated as miraculous to the great detriment of religion. This work of Dr. Marchand's, the President, shows well what the Bureau essays to do, and the various difficulties it has to contend with. These difficulties are mainly two-fold: they arise, firstly, from the enthusiasm of the crowds, who are prone to see the miraculous in any case which appears to them inexplicable; and, secondly, from the ranks of the medical profession itself, in the form of insufficient medical certificates.

We have recently been told that "the conditions obtaining at Lourdes clearly reveal that nothing which can rightly be called medical investigation is possible there." In the last thirty years more than 7,800 medical men have visited the Bureau; surely if there were truth in this drastic statement more would have been heard about it. As Dr. Marchand says,

"Perfection is not of this world." The Bureau makes no pretensions to medical infallibility; the President himself acknowledges that mistakes have been made. "When this occurs, however, the facts are invariably conscientiously noted in our archives, and brought to the notice of the public by means of our official organ, the *Journal of the Grotto*" (p. 90). The criticisms directed against the Medical Bureau almost invariably come from those who have not been there, who seem to think that "the reputation of Lourdes, and its power for good, depends on the good-will of the scientific world," and who clamour for the Medical Bureau to be converted into a species of hospital clinic.

Sick pilgrims come to see our Lady of Lourdes, the "Health of the Sick," and not to have anything to do with the medical profession, except in the event of their cure.

We are also told that "there are serious grounds for anxiety as to the manner in which the honour of our Lady and of the Church is being maintained by a body of admittedly sincere and pious doctors, who, owing to the prevailing conditions, are unable to render efficient medical service." The answer again here is surely to be found in the frequent presence of Monsignor the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, and many other Bishops at the medical debates, who have not considered the honour of our Lady and the Church to be imperilled by the work of the Bureau, but rather the reverse.

The translator of this work has been enabled to spend at Lourdes two long visits during the time of

the great Pilgrimages, amounting in all to almost five months, and hardly a day passed without a considerable amount of time spent in the Bureau. He is himself convinced that he has seen cures which medical science cannot and never will explain, and believes that it would be extremely difficult for anybody to pass an equal amount of time there and not arrive at the same conclusion.

DOM FRANCIS IZARD, O.S.B.

INTRODUCTION

I RETURNED full of enthusiasm, and profoundly moved, from the first French National Pilgrimage at which I had assisted; naturally I was anxious that others, especially medical men, should share my convictions, and it was with a certain measure of surprise that I discovered that the facts of Lourdes were even yet not sufficiently known amongst Catholics.

Some had vaguely heard that in a little town of the Pyrenees supernatural events did occur; others gave only a half-hearted attention to facts which they were told were not articles of faith. Many formed their opinions on the erroneous tales of pilgrims, or on books written in an adverse party spirit, whilst the great majority did not take the trouble to enquire about a subject which did not directly concern them.

Doctors are usually sceptical people, but too many of them absolutely ignore Lourdes, and are simply amazed when they are told of the cures that do occur there, as also at the facilities placed at their disposal to examine the cases.

For many years now I have frequented the Medical Bureau. The late President, my esteemed colleague Dr. Boissarie, accepted me as his collaborator; it was with him and under his direction that I took part in this clinic of the supernatural, to the direction of which I was one day to be called.

I think that the experience I have had authorises me to add my modest contribution towards spreading the knowledge of the events that occur on the banks of the Gave.

Many have written about Lourdes. Both partisans and adversaries of the miraculous have put forward their arguments, exchanged views, and discussed them often with a certain amount of heat. These numerous works contain valuable documents which manifest clearly the supernatural nature of the cures, and the measure in which they can be controlled and scrutinised.

As a result of my study and personal experience, I have also essayed to refute the attacks so often brought against the truths of Lourdes, the point I especially desire to emphasise being the rôle played by the Medical Bureau and by medical men in connection with the Grotto of Lourdes.

Conformably to the decrees of the Church, I declare that each time I use the word "miracle" or "miraculous," I do not intend more than "extraordinary facts," or "facts not explicable by natural laws," the real decision as to the "miraculous" being left to the canonical enquiry of the Church.

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THE FACTS OF LOURDES AND THE MEDICAL BUREAU

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARIES

The message given to Bernadette—The crowds at Lourdes—Absence of complete indifference—Believers and unbelievers—The prodigies—Medical control of the first facts—Spiritual graces.

IN an unknown town of the Pyrenees, on February 11, 1858, at about 11 o'clock in the morning, little Bernadette, the child of a poor miller, just as she was taking off her stockings to wade a stream, suddenly saw in a niche of rock "something dressed in white"—a beautiful Lady, the Immaculate Virgin.

Bernadette was ignorant, very simple, with not the least tendency to mysticism; the Lady asked her that a church should be built there, adding: "I wish people to come here"; and the child, without searching for the slightest explanation, simply repeated what she had heard and seen.

In response to the commands given to the humble girl, thousands and thousands have come from all parts of the world to kneel at this spot, and thousands and thousands of lips have recited the "Hail Mary" of the Rosary.

In spite of the hate and sarcasm of those who wished to silence them, these prayers have continued,

and divine Providence has replied to them by suspending natural laws and reversing the verdict of human science. The most incurable complaints have been cured instantaneously, and health restored to those who had been abandoned by medical science.

For sixty years now Lourdes has presented a marvellous sight from the religious point of view. Immense crowds flock there to implore aid through the intercession of the blessed Virgin. Vast multitudes honour the blessed Sacrament, acclaiming its passage, just as formerly Christ was acclaimed in Judea. Those who have witnessed these moving sights can never forget them. The invocations to Jesus and his holy Mother, during the immersions in the piscines, at the Grotto, and on the great Esplanade of the Rosary Church, are the spontaneous manifestations of faith and piety, and the response of divine mercy to those prayers is a bestowal of abundant graces, not only to souls, but also to sick and dying bodies.

During the blessing of the sick all eyes follow the Sacred Host, and hands are stretched imploringly towards him who is the Resurrection and the Life. "Lord, that I may see"; "Lord, that I may hear"; "Lord, say but one word, and I shall be healed"—such are the cries rising from these great crowds; and not infrequently the dying raise themselves, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the sick walk with a firm step.

Such are the facts—facts which continue with constant regularity.

These prodigies manifested themselves suddenly, in a century of unbelief, in spite of the protestations

of so-called science, and now have finally been classed as inexplicable yet undeniable. Despite mockery and bitter attacks, France to start with, then the world at large, have heard of the marvels occurring on the banks of the Gave: little by little they have become historic facts.

Now pilgrimages are organised from all parts of the world, enormous crowds come together before the rock of Massabielle, and great numbers who had closed their ears to all religious teaching have yet acknowledged the facts and believed as the result of the prodigies they have seen—prodigies which run absolutely counter to natural laws.

These recitals have somewhat perturbed the unbelievers and anticlericals. That "miracles are impossible" was for them an axiom based on Science and Reason; yet at the voice of a child, who was "certainly hallucinated," the attention of all has been fixed on Lourdes. From a sombre grotto there, a ray of light has emanated in all directions, attracting the attention of believers, atheists, freethinkers, the learned and the ignorant.

The faithful thank God, prostrate themselves before the marvels he has deigned to work. Others are restless, hesitate, and ask themselves if the moment has really come to acknowledge the supernatural. Others, again, smile maliciously, simply refusing to believe, for they know that this would involve changing their ideas, and their mode of life. Even some Catholics refuse to examine the facts which they have more or less vaguely heard spoken of, alleging that they are not articles of faith; they refuse to study the evidence,

or reflect about them. Nevertheless they do form some sort of an opinion—an opinion usually coloured by the fantastic tales they have heard, and the writings of hostile critics, who look upon the miraculous as impossible, or as having occurred solely during the life of our Lord.

We see, then, faith, negation, ridicule, ignorance, but never complete indifference.

Here, in a place formerly unknown but now celebrated, Science is obliged to avow its impotence, and Reason bow before Faith.

If unbelievers were really loyal and sincere, they would examine the evidence, renounce preconceived notions, and render homage to the Truth.

In the presence of facts duly witnessed and scientifically controlled, the most prejudiced free-thinkers are somewhat disconcerted, and shaken in their scepticism in spite of themselves.

The facts of Lourdes are not simply legendary recitals, handed down by tradition and history. No; they are actual realities, facts which can be examined and studied; everyone can satisfy himself as to their authenticity. Veritable resurrections occur; organs disorganised or partially destroyed regain their integrity: and this in the full light of day, so that the critic can, if he wishes, examine the facts and verify them by his scientific knowledge.

It is true, *a priori*, that Reason declares such facts incompatible with Science, and Science, so called, resists the evidence. But why? Has Science arrived at perfection? Has it probed into and solved all Nature's secrets? Are there no problems left? As a

matter of fact, Science, assuming an infallibility, absolutely denies the supernatural; but refusing to examine and discuss, by that very fact seems to avow its incompetence to judge. When it does consent to examine the facts it finds itself face to face with irrefutable evidence, and has to allow itself vanquished. The facts of Lourdes testify to the imperfection and feebleness of that Science which believed it could solve all problems.

At the present time, at the foot of the Grotto, where the frail and simple Bernadette saw and heard "the Lady," the intellectual world is divided into two camps—believers and unbelievers.

More than ever there is an obstinate combat between the two armies—between truth and error, between true Science and false Philosophy. When the latter makes recruits, it is not by the logic of her teaching, but because such Philosophy, contrary to true Science, flatters and encourages man's worst instincts.

True Science and sane Philosophy believe that there exists a creative and sustaining power, a First Cause —God, personal, intelligent, free, independent, and infinitely powerful. From this idea of God the possibility of miracles proceeds in a natural way.

For the last sixty years Lourdes has manifested the intervention of a supernatural power. How is it that the facts have always aroused so much opposition?

Lapse of time obscures facts. Little by little they come to be regarded as legendary. The more ancient an event, the less real it seems to be. We regard as certain what we have seen ourselves. Our certitude is less for facts narrated to us if we have not seen them,

even though they have been contemporaneous; and if they are in the distant past, we regard them with a certain amount of incredulity.

The belief in the miraculous incidents of the Gospels has tended to decrease during the centuries. To explain them numerous interpretations have been put forward, and progressively in the case of many there has grown up a certain amount of scepticism. From doubt the passage is easy to deny the possibility of the miraculous, and many have made it.

Well, I believe that the miracles of Lourdes are strictly comparable to those of the Gospels, and are capable of furnishing the latter with a degree of certitude which many previously refused them.

Science is often said to deny the possibility of supernatural facts; in the eyes of irreligious people and atheists "no sensible man can admit the miraculous." But this affirmation rests upon no definite basis; consequently, as it is unsupported by proof or demonstration, the adversaries of religion fall back upon insults and sarcasm.

Sometimes this hatred feigns indifference. There are some freethinkers who put away any decisive examination of the point, and instead of sarcasms they prefer to discuss something else. They would be delighted if the cures of Lourdes sank into complete oblivion. Facts are facts, however, and one can do nothing against them.

If the supernatural is mentioned to the proud, they reply that God has something else to do than to bother himself about the prayers coming from this microscopic world; they will even try to prove that

he does not exist; consequently it is impossible for him to manifest himself here below.

In spite of everything, however, Infinite Power—the finger of God, as it were—does manifest itself at Lourdes. Since the first apparitions of our blessed Lady to Bernadette, cures have not ceased, and many of these have been cases reputed incurable—cases, too, which were nearing their termination. The majority of the sick who visit Lourdes present grave lesions, and divine Providence not infrequently chooses for its manifestations the agonising and the dying.

The reality of these striking cures is incontestable; the most incredulous have witnessed them. The various interpretations of these cures do not stultify their existence. Before searching for their cause we must accept them with their logical consequences. Whatever these may be, it is absolutely certain that at Lourdes, bone diseases, ununited fractures of years' standing, ulcers, fistulæ, and wounds of various sorts, have been suddenly cured; cases of advanced phthisis, with large lung cavities, are instantaneously cicatrised as a result of a bath in the piscines. No conscientious man can remain indifferent to events which are absolutely opposed to the natural order. Before discussing their explanation let us direct our attention in the first place to the reality of the organic lesions, and to their disappearance.

Certainly everyone has the right to discuss the cures which occur yearly at Lourdes, a right also to search for a natural explanation; but, I repeat, no one has a right to deny the facts, or from mere *a priori* reasoning to deny their existence. As we shall see later on, the

facts force themselves upon us despite theory and discussion. Explanatory theories and hypotheses do not change their reality. They exist; and I repeat once again, no one can remain indifferent in the presence of sensible and visible phenomena, for these form a base, a foundation which defies doubt.

To commence with, the cause of the cures at Lourdes was assigned either to the chemical activity of the water, or to its low temperature. Later on radio-activity was invoked. Zola asked if, in addition to the influence of the place, *a bath in freezing water* might not be capable of curing tuberculous affections?

As a matter of fact, the water from the spring in the Grotto has no mineral, therapeutic, or radio-active properties; careful analyses have repeatedly proved this. The influence of the cold water cannot be the cause, for the cures take place not only behind the curtains which screen the baths, but also before thousands of spectators on the Rosary Esplanade.

In the great space which is bounded by the ramps which give access to the Basilica, and in front of the crowned statue of our Lady, there are, during the French National Pilgrimage, as many as a thousand or twelve hundred sick, on stretchers, invalid carriages, etc., lined up before a dense mass of fervent pilgrims. The blessed Sacrament passes before them, acclaimed by hosannas, and greeted with prayers of supplication. To each sick person (or, if they are extremely numerous, before small groups of them) the benediction is given, and it is usually at these moments, as formerly in Judea, that the paralysed get up, the lame walk, and the dying live again. Those

who have been present at this wonderful spectacle can never forget it, nor the emotion they felt in the presence of these wonderful manifestations.

During the National Pilgrimage of 1920, at the procession in the afternoon, I was surrounded by a group of twenty-seven colleagues, who were our guests at the time. It is a privilege of the doctors to follow the blessed Sacrament immediately behind the Bishops, and to pass thus before all the sick. The acclamations of the enormous crowd, the pomp of the religious ceremony, the imploring gestures, and prayers to Jesus in the blessed Sacrament—the display of this quintessence of human suffering and infirmity moved even the most sceptical and indifferent. When we returned to the Medical Bureau, one of the doctors, a foreigner, said to me, with some disdain: "Do not ask me to take part again in your Procession. What is to be thought of medical men who shed tears like women?"

From the very commencement of the apparitions, medical study and a certain measure of scientific control have not been wanting at Lourdes. As soon as Bernadette Soubirous commenced to be a popular topic of conversation, medical men scrutinised the minutest details of her character, her words, and her actions. Some considered her as hallucinated and hysterical, others accused her of lies and trickery. The local practitioners, to commence with, shrugged their shoulders, and declined even to discuss "these superstitions." What use in any enquiry? What has Science to do with such child's play? Dr. Dozous alone was struck by the character of the little girl, and

insisted that she was naturally well-balanced. The various phenomena, he said, which were causing so much excitement were well worth careful examination and study, and he came to the conclusion that this privileged child showed no traces whatever of any mental disturbance.

The doctor at Nevers, who visited the Convent of the Sisters of Charity where Bernadette had been admitted, stated that the young religious "is far from showing any sign of mental symptoms; her simple and tranquil character shows no disposition to nervous trouble."

Dr. Vergès, Professor of the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, who was a member of the Commission appointed in 1858 by Mgr. Laurence, the Bishop of Tarbes, to examine the sick said to have been cured by the miraculous spring discovered by Bernadette, wrote: "On casting a glance over the cures of Lourdes, one would say that there is a violation, an upsetting of all our therapeutic measures, a definite contradiction of the laws of Science, for the phenomena certainly surpass human explanation. How are we to explain the simplicity of the means and the greatness of the result; the same remedy, yet the cure of various diseases; the short duration of the curative agent, the length of treatment necessary according to Science; the success of the former, the failure of the latter?"

Twenty years later, in 1886, Professor Vergès wrote the following declaration, which is preserved in a place of honour on the walls of the Medical Bureau: "If I am asked what I have seen at Lourdes, I reply: By the examination of duly authenticated facts, which

are incontestably proved to be beyond the power of medical art and science, I have seen, have touched, a divine work, *the miraculous*."

Since that time many doctors have visited Lourdes, arriving there as absolute sceptics and irreconcilable adversaries of the miraculous; they have left convinced by the evidence, not being ashamed to avow that they have witnessed facts accomplished before their eyes which they were totally unable to explain. In the case of those who judge Lourdes from a distance, and without eliminating their preconceived philosophical convictions, the result is almost certain to be negative: if instead of this the facts are observed, and carefully studied on the spot, there is every probability that they will arrive at the truth.

Littré, in 1873, compared the miraculous to the results obtained by magnetism, spiritism, etc., which, he said, only occur in circles already convinced in advance. For this author the happenings of Lourdes were simply illusions bolstered up by a naïve credulity and definite fraud. In our own times, according to Bernheim, the cures of Lourdes are authentic; the facts undoubtedly exist, but their explanation is erroneous. We can see, then, how in twenty years there has been a considerable change of ideas.

The time of systematic contempt has passed. In our days the facts of Lourdes are studied most thoroughly. Still, in spite of reason and logic, there is a hesitation about forming an opinion, and a refusal to face the evidence.

How is it that, despite this great movement which has now lasted fifty years, despite careful examina-

tion, discussion and argument, despite numerous and convincing testimony from hundreds and hundreds of witnesses, there is yet scepticism?

Scepticism exists because people do not wish to see. Lourdes frightens them; it seems to lead them to definite cross-roads. If they accept the facts they inevitably lead them on to the truth—and the practice of the Faith.

More astonishing, however, at Lourdes than the physical miracles are the miracles of grace which occur in this atmosphere of prayer and charity. At Lourdes reigns a true fraternity, a true equality. Examples of this are constantly given by all: the stretcher-bearers, the voluntary workers of both sexes in the hospitals and piscines, all forget their own needs and fatigue to devote themselves heart and soul to the care of their poor and suffering brethren. At Lourdes the poor, the unfortunate, are the masters; they find immediately on their arrival in the city of Mary comfortable hospitals to receive them, solicitous care bestowed upon their various ailments, comfort and consolation for their sufferings. The sacrifices made to help others, the mutual affection vivified by the same faith, give the sick patience and resignation. Another miracle at Lourdes is that there is always hope.

Who can compute the number of those who return to God, as a result of breathing this atmosphere of faith and piety? Who can tell the conversions? Some of these we hear of, but the greater number are known only to God. How many men without the slightest disposition to piety, led by curiosity to the banks of

the Gave, either by a chance journey, or by the tender and persevering solicitude of a mother or wife, have been absolutely overwhelmed by the spectacle of ardent faith and prayer which surrounded them? How many have suddenly put away their past, their ancient convictions, to become convinced and practising Catholics?

One evening at about nine o'clock, during a large pilgrimage, a priest issuing from the Rosary Church was stopped by a young man, obviously labouring under considerable emotion. He timidly asked the priest to hear his confession. The numerous confessionals were beset with penitents, and it would take some time, said the young man, for he had not been near a confessional for twenty years, not since his first Communion; so, seated on one of the stone steps which flank the door of the church, his confession was heard. After the absolution had been pronounced, and peace restored to this soul of good-will, he said to the priest, with a face wet with tears: "How happy I am! The desire to receive pardon for all my sins suddenly overwhelmed me. Father," he added, "would you have the kindness to do me one more service? Come with me to see my dear mother; she will scarcely believe me if you do not come as witness of the grace you have accorded me."

Evidently, if one places oneself solely on scientific grounds, it is the curability of the apparently incurable which is the characteristic feature of Lourdes. If, however, the whole is envisaged in the light of religion; if the prayers, the edifying piety, which are witnessed everywhere are taken into account, then the

supernatural cures of the body are only one amongst other manifestations of the spiritual life and Catholic Faith.

God cures the sick not only to soothe pain and restore health; his motive is more than cure—it is to put the supernatural in evidence, it is to affirm his infinite power. Our blessed Lady wishes that the crowds at Lourdes shall be struck by the presence of this supernatural power, and that they shall believe more firmly.

Around the sanctuaries of Lourdes, the cure of the body is not all; the contact works a real transformation in the soul.

What a sad spectacle is one of these poor unfortunates stretched on his bed for months, perhaps for years! Art has done what could be done, but now there is no hope; the sufferer is condemned to lifelong sickness, and he realises that all his efforts are useless.

When such cases set out for Lourdes, they support with heroic courage all the inconveniences and discomforts of the long journey; no complaints escape from their lips—they patiently bear everything, upheld and sustained by hope.

What deception, what disillusionment, if they do not obtain their desire at Lourdes, if their paralysed limbs are not cured, their pains do not cease, their wounds remain unhealed!

Well, this is not the case. A prodigy is worked: as soon as they arrive at Lourdes, raise their eyes to the statue of our Lady, and bathe in the piscine, they are transformed. The fear of not being cured disappears; it is replaced by a humble submission to the

will of God. Not one departs from Lourdes unconsoled, uncomforted.

Undoubtedly one of the permanent miracles of Lourdes is the *resignation* that is acquired there; it is not infrequent to hear from the lips of the sick: "O God, do not cure me; I offer my sufferings, my life, for those who are worse, who suffer more than I do."

Boissarie[1] quotes the case of a consumptive patient from Villepinte, who received one day the visit of a Parisian doctor accompanied by his brother—an engineer by profession, and a Protestant. The doctor had given marks of his great interest in the poor sufferer, and Juliette Forêt had been much moved by his sympathy. A few days after his visit she wrote to a friend: "I am hoping that the blessed Virgin will cure me; I shall be very sad if my illness persists. However, I willingly make the sacrifice of my health and life, if it will ensure the conversion of Monsieur X——, the Protestant who visited me recently." Such an offer received a very definite recompense; our Lady of Lourdes answered all the prayers of the pious girl: she herself was cured of phthisis, which was nearing its fatal termination; the doctor became a Redemptorist priest, and the Protestant engineer a Catholic.

During the summer of 1920 Monsieur X——, a distinguished member of Parisian society, entered the Medical Bureau. He was accompanied by his wife and daughter. The latter was a charming child, twelve years of age, with sweet and regular features, endowed with unusual intelligence, and having the appearance of perfect health; her otherwise pretty face

[1] *The Cures of Lourdes*, first series, p. 70.

was, however, completely marred by a pronounced squint. With eyes full of tears, Madame X—— told me of the grief this caused both herself and her husband. They had come to implore her cure from our Lady of Lourdes, and did not doubt that their earnest desire would be granted.

Three days afterwards I received again a visit from the X—— family. "Doctor," said the mother, apparently quite consoled, "all three of us have made the sacrifice of the cure. After all, we have earthly wealth; this trouble is but a wound to our self-love, and what is it in comparison to the revolting illnesses which we see around us? May the blessed Virgin still continue our slight cross and come to the assistance of our less fortunate brethren, for whom we offer our prayers and this sacrifice."

Who knows with what graces the Immaculate Virgin may have recompensed such charity?

CHAPTER II

THE FACTS

The miraculous cures—Incurable cases—Circumstances of the cure — Persistence of the cure — *La Grivotte* — Scientific opposition—Attacks made in bad faith—Pulmonary tuberculosis—*Louis Thurel*—*Juliette Nancey*—The time factor—Nervous diseases—*Ernestine Guilloteau*—*Mademoiselle Pr*——Suggestion—The water of the spring—*Irène Salin*—*Valentine Gougaud*—Nature's unknown forces —Natural cures—The enthusiasm of the crowd—Premature accounts and publications—Necessity for a Medical Bureau.

I

TO make any serious study of the supernatural facts of Lourdes, it is most important in the first place to understand clearly what is connoted by the term "a miraculous or supernatural cure."

Some people have most erroneous ideas. A "miraculous" cure does not necessarily indicate the whole and complete restoration of some diseased tissues, or the sudden reconstitution, as it were, of a new organ. When a bone is destroyed by some form of osteitis, with the separation of fragments (*sequestra*), there is no necessity that the bone should be restored to its original condition to constitute a supernatural cure; nor, again, in the case of the lungs, that it should be replaced by normal lung tissue: with the latter the cure usually takes place by scar tissue, the scar forming definite evidence of the old trouble—the *signature of the miracle*, as it were. We are well aware that outside those maladies which experience and research have taught us are incurable, the re-

sources of Nature are enormous; with appropriate treatment and time, the most alarming symptoms may subside, leading to most unexpected improvement, sometimes even to complete cure of the affected organ. Such a result is only obtained after long and persevering treatment. But when, after the failure of all efforts, health returns abruptly without the convalescence which accompanies natural cures, when healing is effected in the "twinkling of an eye," at that precise moment when the patient and his friends are invoking the divine mercy, then, I repeat, it is impossible to explain such a case by our own knowledge or experience.

Some diseases are supernatural because the disease is *incurable;* such is the case with cancer. Others, again, owe their miraculous character to the mode, as, for instance, a case of hip disease, or an ulcer instantaneously cured. Here the *instantaneity* of the cure is the supernatural feature, for it is in direct contradiction with the laws of Nature, and could not be accounted for by the perfection or skill of the previous treatment.

Lourdes! Supernatural cures! With what disdain and scorn these words were used to commence with. However, in spite of this the name of the little Pyrenean city became more widely known, and the knowledge of the wonderful cures that occur there penetrated everywhere.

Gradually intelligent people began to evince a certain amount of legitimate curiosity. Those who came and saw for themselves commenced to enquire as to the cause of the strange phenomena they wit-

ERRATUM

Page 18, line 14. *For* "some diseases are supernatural," *read* "some cures are supernatural."

ZOLA'S *LA GRIVOTTE* (MARIE LEBRANCHU).

nessed. They found themselves in the presence of cures which differed absolutely from those so far obtained by medical science.

This difference is threefold—*instantaneity*, *completeness*, and *permanence* of the cure. The disease suddenly disappears, leaving no trace. At the same time the weakness produced by the illness also disappears, even though it has been very extreme. In short, the great majority of the cases are radically cured, and never suffer from any relapse.

In the novel that he wrote about Lourdes in 1892, Zola describes with great realism the disease and the cure of three or four patients who had particularly drawn his attention, in the special train which conveyed them there, which the novelist had been allowed to accompany.

Choosing one of these patients—Mademoiselle Marie Lebranchu, of Paris—he made her the heroine of his book under the name of *La Grivotte*. Zola describes with the minutest details all the symptoms presented by "this girl of more than thirty—whose curly hair and flaming eyes made her almost beautiful —always sweating, breathing with difficulty, coughing as if to cough her heart out—cavities, you know! —she can walk no longer, and eats almost nothing." In a word, the author is quite convinced of the gravity and the incurability of Marie Lebranchu's disease, which was phthisis at its last stage; there was spitting of blood, pus, and tubercle bacilli in the sputum.

Zola knew and said that the patient's condition was hopeless, and he does all that is possible to make his readers share his conviction. Then he recounts the

cure of *La Grivotte;* how she was scarcely immersed in the piscine, when, as if impelled by some sudden stimulus, she raised herself, crying out: "I am cured!" He followed her to the Medical Bureau, the doors of which were widely opened to him. He assisted at the official discussion made by more than twenty doctors, who testified to the sudden disappearance of all the lesions in the lungs, and was a witness of this veritable resurrection. Finally, he saw her that same evening in the torchlight procession, when she appeared to have regained all her strength, and remarked that "if the blessed Virgin had given a ball, *La Grivotte* would have danced the whole night."

Zola described a miracle, a true miracle; but as he did not wish this at any price, he pretends that no miracle took place, that the cure of Marie Lebranchu was an illusion, nothing but a passing amelioration. He gets rid of the patient, who would have been somewhat troublesome to him, and depicts how in the train the terrible malady recommences, she spits blood abundantly, and dies of consumption almost as soon as she reaches Paris.

Well, as a matter of fact the cure of *La Grivotte* was a permanent one: there was no illusion about it. Zola's pretence that his heroine died after her journey from Lourdes is an absolute falsehood. The sudden cure of Marie Lebranchu's tuberculous lesions was as supernatural in its persistence as in its instantaneity. The cure was absolutely definite, for it stood the test of time.

Marie Lebranchu married, and becoming a widow, did not die in 1892, but on August 11, 1920, twenty-

eight years after her cure. She died piously with the Religious of the Good Shepherd at Angers, by whom she had been brought up, and with whom she lived after the death of her husband.

At Lourdes, the most diverse and serious diseases are cured by a supernatural force which acts when, where, or as it will, either suddenly repairing diseased organs, eliminating morbid material, or creating new living matter.

These manifestations of supernatural power, suspending or reversing at will Nature's laws, act beyond our prevision or calculation. In the cures at Lourdes not all are favoured. Why does this one rather than that recover health? Are they always those who are more worthy? By no means; sometimes the indifferent or even the enemies of religion are cured! Here we are in the presence of mystery, of insoluble problems.

Whatever may be the cause, one fact is certain—that on the banks of the Gave cures of supposed incurable diseases do take place, the cure taking place in a time manifestly insufficient to produce natural cure. In these cases there appears to be a change in the whole constitution, for not only is the disease cured, but the patient is protected from all return of that particular ailment. What medical treatment is capable of giving such a result?

To reply to this question, a definite conclusion, and not some half-truth, should be reached. In face of such facts the answer should be either affirmative or negative. The problem of Lourdes is clear and precise. The solution is not to be reached by multiplying

theories, heaping up hypotheses, and elaborating data. The facts are attested by numerous witnesses; they should be examined after putting away preconceived opinions and convictions; they should be examined clinically, following a definite scientific method. If this is done, then logically and irresistibly it will be recognised that the limits of Nature and Science are passed at Lourdes.

II

It is not difficult to understand the resistance that reason makes to the facts of Lourdes; it is easy to grasp, also, how difficult it is for the medical profession to reject knowledge acquired by study and experience. Tumours disappear in the piscine.[1] Unhealed fractures of long standing suddenly unite.[2] Wounds cicatrise in a second.[3] Phthisical cavities suddenly dry up.[4] Lesions of the optic nerve are radically cured.[5] Such facts as these cannot be explained, for they are contrary to all medical experience.

[1] Marie Richard, of Vauvilliers. Cancer of both breasts. August 27, 1900.—Madame Travaillard, of Tours. Cancer of the uterus. July 14, 1910.—René Clément, of Anglet, Basses-Pyrénées. Cancer of the face. October 11, 1911.

[2] Pierre De Rudder. April 7, 1875.—Marguerite Verzier, of Lyons. July 9, 1909.

[3] Joachine Dehant. Ulcer extending from knee to ankle. September 13, 1878.—Marie Borel, of Cultur, Lozère. Stercoral fistulæ. August 22, 1907.—Léonie Léveque, of Nogent-le-Rotrou. Frontal sinus disease. July 18, 1908.

[4] Aurélie Huprelle, of Beauvais. August 25, 1895.—Sister St Ambrose of Limoges. August 23, 1911.

[5] Madame Biré, of Ste Gemme, Vendée. August 5, 1909.—Henri Lebacq, of Douai. September 3, 1912.

Should such cures be accepted solely on hearsay evidence? No, they should be personally examined and discussed. The great majority of those, however, who deny the facts of Lourdes have never examined them on the spot. They started with preconceived theories against the miraculous, and have supported their theory by selecting cases which did not offer sufficient guarantees.

Very frequently at the close of long arguments, of evidence which cannot be refuted, they say with a certain hesitation: "Certainly, what you tell me is most extraordinary! But—I have not seen it for myself."

What a vast number of things we believe without having seen them for ourselves. When evidence comes from trustworthy people; when it is not the case of one witness (*testis nullus*), but of twenty or a hundred; when the evidence reposes not on one fact, but on many extending over a long series of years—is it not then more reasonable to believe?

Supposing that one doctor only affirmed that in a certain case or series of cases the ordinary laws of medicine were violated, and that he had observed phenomena in absolute contradiction to normal clinical facts: it would certainly be quite reasonable to doubt. It might be asked if he had not been under some illusion, had some fixed idea, or been in definite error. But when it is a case of observation concerning cures which have stood the test of time, and have every guarantee of authenticity, then it is not fair to doubt the good faith and observation of so many witnesses.

A categorical denial is very easy, nothing more so; but then, we must admit that all the doctors who have looked after the patients, and have given evidence of what they have personally seen, must either be ignorant or impostors; that all those who have examined the results carefully and believe in these supernatural cures are either deceivers or deceived.

A certain Dr. R——, who published a large work entitled *The Truth about Lourdes*,[1] belonged to this category. The doctor tells us that his aim was to demonstrate that there was nothing extraordinary about the apparitions of Lourdes, because Bernadette was hysterical; consequently, there was no sufficient basis for Lourdes to become a place of pilgrimage. The reason he undertook this laborious task was, he frankly tells us, because "he who possesses even a part of the truth has the duty to make this known to others."

Dr. R——, then, considered it to be his duty to reveal the truth, supported as it was by the teaching of Science. How did he set about it? Did he go to Lourdes to study the cures?

Not at all. In the quiet of his study on the other side of the Mediterranean, he accumulated the necessary documents which proved the "dense ignorance" of everybody who had anything to do with making Lourdes a place of pilgrimage. To support his theory "that neurotic patients only have been, and can be cured at Lourdes," does he reply to the alleged facts by bringing counter-evidence? Against the examinations of the Bureau does he oppose other

[1] Paris: E. Nourry, 1910.

examinations? Not at all. *A priori* he denies the miraculous, and supports his thesis on what he deems to be irrefutable arguments; but these arguments of his rest on no serious base.

According to him, the majority of his colleagues who have expressed their belief in the supernatural are either ignorant or in bad faith, and the certificates of those who are conscientious have been falsified. (By whom? Doubtless by the doctors at the Medical Bureau at Lourdes.) Others have signed certificates of cure, thinking that if they did not do so their practice would suffer to some extent from the bigotry of their patients.

The assertions, therefore, of only a small number can be considered as worthy of credence, and this is insufficient. The ordinary practitioner who attests that his patient was cured at the Grotto knows perfectly well that the cure took place beforehand. According to Dr. R——, when four phthisical patients from that model establishment Villepinte were cured in 1898, the doctors of Villepinte must have made an error in diagnosis; . . . these cases were hysterical ones simulating phthisis. And so on . . . Dr. R—— has previously told his readers that the patients cured are all hysterical; yet in spite of this, amongst the cured are a large number of malingerers, very skilful in deceiving others.

When this distinguished practitioner who possesses "part of the truth" discusses a case, his mode of procedure is almost invariably the same. He strives to demonstrate that the malady cured was some hysterical manifestation. For this he gives no

proof, but confines himself to doubtful hypotheses and vague assertions, supported by such phrases as "Who tells us that . . .," "This is without doubt . . .," "It is probable . . .," "The affair must have happened in this way . . .," "I maintain that . . .," "I believe I have demonstrated . . ."

Finally, Dr. R——, in the name of truth, arrives at the following wonderful conclusion: "Since the creation of Lourdes some two thousand sick have recovered their health there, yet more than four millions have come there uselessly . . . And these four millions *are the proof that the heavens are empty*."

It is not sufficient to build up a system on negation, and to make hypotheses. Careful and conscientious examinations cannot be replied to simply by asserting "bad faith," "personal conviction." Surely it is a curious fact, how those who refuse to believe in the supernatural never respect the opinions of those who do, and at the same time are never silent about it. They should understand that their action, far from destroying belief in the miraculous, calls attention to it; by never ceasing to attack the supernatural, they show how much importance they attach to its manifestations.

III

If the archives of the Medical Bureau are consulted, hundreds of medical signatures are to be seen, coming from all countries, giving detailed and authentic descriptions of the various cases. The names of many distinguished in medicine may be seen there,

who have pronounced definitely as to the incurability of certain cases, and thus have contributed definite and exact scientific evidence.

So many independent medical witnesses coming from various schools, the opinions of those most highly qualified to judge, should, one would imagine, afford sufficient guarantees. But this is by no means the case. The witnesses are rejected at the outset, the most formal attestations are thrown to one side, the facts are judged from a distance, and all sorts of theories are brought in, which will permit such interpretations as the author desires; or the facts are co-ordinated according to some rationalistic or materialistic idea.

Is it credible that all doctors who believe should discard their science, all competence of judgement, and observation of facts, when they speak of what they have seen themselves, and what they aver cannot be explained according to the laws of science?

Any sophism is apparently good enough to avoid study and discussion: Here, for instance, is a rapidly growing tumour, which ulcerates, is accompanied by induration of the glands, and which recurs after removal, causing also that constitutional change which is called cachexia. Such a tumour presents clinically every indication that it is malignant, and every doctor would declare that it is incurable. This growth is, however, cured suddenly and completely at Lourdes: immediately discussion is refused; it is asserted that the tumour was perfectly curable, and to avoid examination the objectors shelter themselves behind absence of labora-

tory examination, microscopic and radiographic proof, etc.

Again, if the gravity and incurability of some illness has been affirmed judicially on oath, after evidence given by sworn experts, they reply that Justice is no more infallible than Medicine.

If experts base their conclusion on the symptoms, extent, and gravity of some disease, they reply that errors of diagnosis are frequent, and always probable! But what is pathology based upon? Surely upon the descriptions given by observers of symptoms, etc., which testify by their presence and regularity to its authenticity.

When some disease is described by a doctor according to methods which govern medical examinations, the fact he announces cannot be denied without also throwing doubt upon all clinical and pathological work.

There are some maladies where the diagnosis may be established absolutely positively, especially when the disease is advanced. Such, for instance, are advanced cases of pulmonary tuberculosis. Even those outside the medical profession can often recognise, from the patient's appearance, the nature, and to a certain extent the duration, of the disease.

The doctor who can put forward an erroneous diagnosis, when tubercular bacilli and tuberculous lesions have been present for years, must be grossly ignorant. The signs of advanced trouble with cavitation in the lungs can be distinguished by means of auscultation even by the student, and when these are accompanied by fever, night sweats, tubercle

bacilli in the sputum, loss of appetite and strength, the diagnosis is certain, and the prognosis usually fatal.

When the lung is destroyed, when a generalisation of the tuberculous process has overcome the resistive mechanisms of the body, suggestion or nervous shock is incapable of replacing purulent and destroyed tissues by healthy tissue.

At Lourdes, however, patients who arrive in the last stage of phthisis, almost in their agony, suddenly declare themselves cured, and experience an unaccustomed feeling of health. Those who had been confined to bed for months suddenly rise and commence to walk. Their dyspnœa has ceased, giving place to full and normal respirations. Their temperature has fallen, appetite returned. Auscultation, to start with, perhaps reveals still some slight signs—impairment of resonance, a few râles; but the principal signs have disappeared, the cavities are repaired in a moment, and their cure is definitely confirmed in a few days, sometimes a few hours, when no lesion can be found and examination of the sputum reveals no bacilli.

I give here a résumé of the official notes of two cures of pulmonary tubercle, where the return to health took place just as I have described above. The two patients had been treated, the one in both military and civil hospitals, the other by several practitioners of her native town. The details which are given, indicating the nature and extent of the disease and the completeness of the cure, seem to me to offer all the necessary guarantees.

I. LOUIS THUREL, *aged twenty-three, of Verdun. Pulmonary tuberculosis. French National Pilgrimage,* 1913. (*Nos.* 40 *and* 77 *of the Register of* 1913.)

Louis Thurel arrived at Lourdes on August 21, 1913, with the French National Pilgrimage. His papers were accompanied by the following certificate from Dr. Guérin, physician to the hospital of Verdun:

"I, the undersigned, certify that M. L. F. Thurel, declared unfit for military service by reason of pulmonary tuberculosis, presents the characteristic signs of chronic bronchitis, accompanied by abundant expectoration. He has lost much weight, and his strength has much diminished.

"(*Signed*) DR. GUÉRIN.

"VERDUN,
"*July* 17, 1913."

It is frequently asserted with regard to Lourdes that many of the cures possess certificates lacking both accuracy and essential particulars. This cannot be applied to this case, for in the "dossier" of the patient there is an unassailable piece of evidence; this is a certificate from the Military Examining Board of Verdun, dated May 7, 1913, and this leaves no doubt about the nature of the pulmonary lesions. In the military hospital the patient had an evening temperature of 38° to 39° C., a continual cough, much insomnia, abundant expectoration, with *numerous bacilli* in the sputum.

The gravity of the case is shown from the fact that when he had been formally discharged, despite the

LOUIS THUREL OF VERDUN, AUGUST 24, 1913.

strictness of the military regulations on this head, he had nevertheless to be retained in the wards of the military hospital for three months, his state absolutely precluding his transference to the civil hospital. His transfer only took place on August 1.

It was on March 25, 1913, that Louis Thurel was admitted to the Regimental Infirmary with the diagnosis of pleurisy on the left side. On April 10 he was sent to the hospital with the diagnosis of "dry pleurisy." Soon definite signs of tubercular trouble manifested themselves, and became so serious that on May 7 he was invalided out of the Army. It was in this very precarious condition that the young man was admitted into the National Pilgrimage train, bringing with him the certificate from Dr. Guérin. The journey down to the Pyrenees was very trying, and he arrived in a state of extreme weakness. The dyspnœa was markedly increased. He coughed so much, and respiration was so embarrassed, that it would have been impossible for him to have made any further journey.

Directly on his arrival Louis Thurel was taken to the Grotto. The coolness of the night air caused some pain in his chest. He was immersed three times in the water of the piscine, but felt only its icy coldness. At the fourth immersion, however, the water seemed to him to be agreeably warm; he was able to say a prayer clearly and articulately; at the same time he had an indefinable feeling of being considerably better. On the following day, at the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, he experienced an unusual interior sensation, which was followed by

a feeling of health. When he returned to the hospital he seemed unable to satisfy his appetite, to the great amazement of his neighbours. On the following morning everyone was surprised at the wonderful change for the better in his appearance. At the Medical Bureau on Sunday, August 24, the doctors entrusted with his examination could find no alteration of the respiratory rhythm, or any trace of lesion on the right side. At the left there was slight dulness at the apex, the breathing was a little harsh, but without any dry or moist sounds. One of the doctors present, a professor at the Medical Naval School, who examined the patient, insisted on the fact that signs of consolidation still existed at the left apex, and watched very attentively as to what would be the conclusion of the Bureau.

The following conclusions were adopted :

(1) Instantaneous disappearance of certain lesions characteristic of phthisis in its third stage.

(2) No definite conclusion can be arrived at. The patient must be seen later.

(3) If the healing process already commenced progresses and maintains itself, it cannot be attributed to a natural process.

Three months later, on November 30, at Paris, Dr. de Grandmaison de Bruno, our excellent friend and colleague, presented Louis Thurel at the annual Réunion to an audience of five hundred assembled for these "Assizes of the Faith"; the young man showed absolutely no sign of any pulmonary lesion.

Distrustful of his own examination, Dr. Grandmaison then asked one of his young colleagues there

MLLE. JULIETTE NANCEY OF CHAUMONT (HAUTE-MARNE),
AUGUST 19, 1921.

to examine the case. This gave similar results. The report of Dr. Grandmaison was as follows:

"At the present time it is impossible, from the physical signs, to say that Thurel has been or is now tuberculous. He has gained seven kilogrammes in weight since his discharge from the Army, and is capable of undertaking walks of twenty miles or so. These are not the signs of illness, and especially of pulmonary tuberculosis."

II. JULIETTE NANCEY, *aged thirty, of Chaumont (Haute-Marne). Pulmonary tuberculosis. The French National Pilgrimage*, 1921. (*Dossier No.* 19 *of* 1921.)

Mademoiselle Juliette Nancey has for the past eleven years had tuberculous trouble in both lungs.

In 1910 she had some pulmonary congestion. In 1911 symptoms of tuberculous laryngitis presented themselves, accompanied by hæmoptysis. Her medical attendant, Dr. Ripaut, then gave a very gloomy prognosis, saying that there was little probability of her living more than six months. That same year in the course of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, the laryngeal trouble improved very considerably, and the voice became normal. Soon, however, after an attack of bronchitis, pleurisy appeared on both sides of the chest.

In 1914 there was more hæmoptysis, and the patient's life was despaired of. Following what seemed to be a meningeal attack and an intestinal hæmorrhage, the Last Sacraments were administered.

Dr. Fenestre declared at this time that, outside a miracle, recovery was hopeless. A severe enteritis

now complicated the other troubles. In June, 1920, Juliette Nancey had to take to her bed, and there she remained until the day of her cure. She was attacked with a specific bronchitis of both apices, accompanied by hæmoptysis.

The patient reached Lourdes on August 19, 1921, with the 49th French National Pilgrimage. Her weakness was then extreme, and she was almost unconscious.

Her papers contained the following two certificates :

(1) "Mademoiselle Nancey is suffering from active tuberculosis, and has a lesion in the superior lobe of the right lung; the tuberculosis has progressed slowly during the last four years. She has spitting of blood, progressive wasting, fever, loss of appetite, etc.

"(*Signed*) DR. MALINGRE.

"CHAUMONT (HAUTE-MARNE),
"*June* 16, 1914."

(2) "Mademoiselle Nancey is suffering from a chronic bronchitis of both apices. Her general health is extremely feeble, necessitating continual rest in bed. Cough, with slight expectoration, occasional hæmoptysis; complete absence of menstruation. From the beginning of June, 1921, she has remained almost totally oblivious to her surroundings. She is fed with difficulty. It would seem that there are some signs of a tuberculous meningitis.

(*Signed*) DR. WEIL.

"CHAUMONT,
"*July* 4, 1921."

On August 19, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, Juliette Nancey was carried to the piscine, in the same semi-unconscious state. Suddenly she experienced a wonderful sensation of well-being, and declared that she was cured. The drowsiness disappeared completely and suddenly; she was able to respire deeply; and the menstruation, which had disappeared for a year, was re-established painlessly immediately after the bath.

At the Medical Bureau on August 21, her examination was entrusted to Dubédat, of St Sever (Landes); Rouquette, of Méze (Hérault); Michelet, of Bordeaux; Coulange, of Marseilles; Turo, of Barcelona.

The following report was drawn up:

"*Lungs.*—At the apex of the right lung, both anteriorly and posteriorly, there is some 'cog-wheeled' respiration; otherwise the respirations are normal. There is some slight dulness below the clavicle. The voice-sounds in the scapular region are normal. Left lung seems to be normal.

"*Heart.*—Beating rather forcibly and hurriedly, under the influence of her emotion. No abnormal sounds.

"*General Condition.*—Temperature in the mouth, 36° C. Very marked wasting. The patient states that she has considerable increase of appetite. No more somnolence. Is in good spirits, and has a feeling of health. During the examination, which lasted an hour, there was no coughing or expectoration."

The report having been read before the doctors

present at the Bureau, the following conclusions were unanimously adopted:

(1) The illness undoubtedly existed.

(2) There is an apparent cure.

(3) It will be necessary to wait, and make the final conclusion in six months or a year.

On the following day, August 22, Juliette Nancey returned to the Medical Bureau. There a fresh examination was made, and this showed that the cure commenced the evening before had been completed in less than twenty-four hours.

The slight dulness beneath the right clavicle had completely disappeared. No abnormal signs were discoverable and the respiration was the same on both sides.

In consequence of this, the following conclusions were adopted, and added to the notes of her case:

(1) The illness undoubtedly existed.

(2) There is a complete cure.

(3) This cure cannot be attributed to a natural process.

In the course of the enquiry, however, the examining doctors, thinking that some points of the history as given by Mademoiselle Nancey were not sufficiently clear, asked for further details from the doctors whose certificates were contained in her notes.

Dr. Malingre replied "that he had attended Mademoiselle Nancey before the War for several abundant hæmoptyses; she had a definite localised lesion of the lung, which had also been attested by Dr. Mougeot, who had seen her in consultation."

Doctor Weil wrote on August 29: "The terms of

the certificate which I wrote at the request of Mademoiselle Nancey before her departure for Lourdes were scrupulously correct."

On July 15, 1922, the same doctor stated:

"Mademoiselle Nancey's health is satisfactory from all points of view. Respiration is normal, and the lung signs which were present during the first six months of 1921 have disappeared.

"(*Signed*) DR. WEIL."

In the two cures that I have just described it seems to me that it would be difficult to combat either the facts or the diagnosis: in both cases they had been attested by many examinations made by different medical men.

In the case of Louis Thurel, we have the hospital evidence, in addition to that of the Army Examining Board which gave him his discharge. With Juliette Nancey we have for several years the evidence of different practitioners.

At Lourdes the examinations were made by medical men not attached to the Medical Bureau, and simply designated to examine the cases because they happened to be present. Their conclusions were also adopted by the other doctors there.

In both cases some lesions were cured, and those only partially so had totally disappeared either the next day, or in a very few days. These results were obtained in the case of patients who were much emaciated, and giving evidence of a generalisation of their tuberculous condition; that is to say, they were in the worst possible condition for cure.

It is, then, permissible to state, in these two cases, whose medical histories I have retraced, that the sudden return to a state of health surpasses the limits of both nature and science.

IV

Science is unable to replace lungs excavated by cavities, and infiltrated by tubercle, with healthy lung tissue. It is true that in our time science has made wondrous strides. Steam and electricity have conquered distance, the microscope has unveiled the secrets of life in the infinitely small, X-rays and radium have produced astonishing results. Nevertheless, science has to halt before certain changes effected in the human body, she is powerless to explain facts scientifically demonstrated, and sometimes finds herself actually contradicted. With all her resources she is incapable of annihilating instantaneously some lesion which has destroyed an organ; she has never restored health and life to some consumptive almost at the last gasp. Facts such as these have, however, taken place at Lourdes, and the divine power continues to manifest itself there. Human science, however perfect it may be, has never attained such results.

Many cases of tubercle come to Lourdes every year to implore their cure but are not healed. One case, however, which presents lesions in the so-called third stage, and is definitely cured in a few minutes, is a proof of supernatural intervention. The statistics of Lourdes contain not one but several such cases

What doctor is there who can assert that he has cured such a case?

Certainly it is next to impossible to prove that there is any organic lesion which with appropriate remedies, careful treatment and time may not be cured. It can nevertheless be asserted that, without treatment, without that necessary factor of time, a return to perfect health without passing through a stage of convalescence is, materially speaking, impossible. In definite organic maladies of the stomach, such as ulcer and cancer, the lack of food and the abundant hæmorrhages are promptly followed by wasting and cachexia: the patients are emaciated to the last degree, and have the aspect of veritable skeletons. In such cases a speedy fatal termination seems inevitable. Yet at Lourdes they have been cured practically instantaneously.

We do not as yet know all the laws of Nature, but at least this is certain: those we do know, Nature will not contradict in the future. Tuberculosis in the last stage and cancer are at present considered as incurable, but a time may come when, owing to the discovery of some new remedy, some serum or vaccine, we may even then cure these maladies. But actually such a remedy has not been found, and the disappearance of such a disease during the course of some novena or pilgrimage constitutes a fact which is, humanly speaking, inexplicable. Even should such remedies be discovered, a sudden cure such as those we have spoken of would be supernormal, because we know that repair takes place according to definite laws, and these laws demand a certain duration of

time for the processes of nutrition and cell multiplication.

V

The adversaries of Lourdes assert that only nervous cases are cured there. It is easy to refute this assertion; we can demonstrate the cure of many varieties of organic lesions, which have been subjected to the most scrupulous enquiry both as to their diagnosis and sudden cure. "The faith which cures" can only act suddenly in the case of functional nervous maladies. Eighty out of a hundred cures at Lourdes are organic lesions, in which suggestion and hypnosis, even if they may aid in some cases the process of healing, yet can do comparatively little, and then need a definite time. At Lourdes there are records of the cure of pulmonary and osseous tuberculosis, of definite organic lesions of the spinal cord, diseases of the optic disc, etc.

Those who wish to make the nervous system accountable for all the cures have great difficulty in bringing various diseases into this category, and when they are unable to do this they simply reject evidence which does not coincide with their preconceived notions and theories. If it is a question of tuberculous hip disease, or the cure of Pott's disease of the spine, what do our adversaries say then? In spite of the evidence, they make an appeal to nervous influences. It must have been a case of "nervous hip" or spinal pain of an hysterical nature. But there are cases of caries where the resulting suppuration tracks down along the muscles, an abscess collects and discharges externally; there are cases of hip disease

accompanied by necrosis of the bone, where fistulæ communicate with the interior of the joint.[1] When these cases are cured instantaneously, what sensible man, who is loyal at the same time, will venture to call such nervous cases?

According to the recommendations of Pope Benedict XIV, who did not wish that the term "miracle" should be applied in the case of nervous subjects, it is well known that at Lourdes we put on one side such cases, observing a rigid silence in those in which there might be some nervous influence.

At Lourdes we do undoubtedly see the instantaneous cure of functional disease, similar cases to those seen in our hospitals, and at the Salpêtrière: some nervous paralysis suddenly disappears in the piscine or during the passage of the Blessed Sacrament, or someone recovers his speech after a long interval.

Such cures as these our enemies seize upon, to support and bolster up their objections; but I repeat that we do not take notice of them, we do not reckon such in our statistics, these cases are never officially published.

Cures of this kind, even if instantaneous and permanent, can never be regarded as certainly miraculous. It may be that for the patient these cures are great graces, but, medically speaking, we cannot attribute them to a supernatural power, for they may be caused naturally.

At times our statistics contain notes and references

[1] Marguerite Chauvet, d'Alais. Right-sided hip disease with fistulæ. August 26, 1919.

to nervous cases, but in these cases the patients have been cured of definite organic maladies at the same time. To be a sufferer from hysteria does not protect from tuberculosis, cancer, or fracture of a limb. If in a case of hysteria a tumour disappeared suddenly, a fracture was consolidated in a few seconds, or advanced tuberculosis was suddenly cured, the fact is certainly supernatural. We class them as such, although taking care in the notes to mention the hysterical symptoms. This is a matter of elementary good faith, for it is obvious that all the cases which manifest nervous symptoms cannot be rejected.

If the cure is *purely* functional, then no mention is made of it. And yet, may there not be nervous maladies of such gravity that the whole organism is affected by them? Functional lesions that occasion organic alterations before which Science is powerless?

Those who wish to prove that all the maladies cured at Lourdes are nervous cases have a definite end in view, and that is to demonstrate that the subjects favoured could have been perfectly cured naturally. But it is far from the case that all these functional nervous cases are easily cured. We all know, as a matter of fact, that it is frequently very difficult.

There are, for example, nervous cases caused by traumatism, by some great shock which the organism has received; as a result the various bodily functions and the whole economy suffer; such accidents often cause illnesses which are almost incurable, and are often followed by death. The cure of Gabriel Gargam is a case in point. Here was a postal official badly injured in a railway collision. Paralysis, followed by

MLLE. ERNESTINE GUILLOTEAU OF TAILLIS (VENDÉE)
AT THE MOMENT OF HEALING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1908.

gangrene, had reduced him to a moribund condition; yet suddenly, during the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, he raised himself, looking like a veritable skeleton issuing from a tomb. A cure such as this is contrary to all theories and all scientific prevision. When the doctors tried to define the lesion, to settle precisely what was the diagnosis of the malady which had reduced him to such a state, they were sorely embarrassed. Some talked of injury or compression of the spinal cord, others attributed all the symptoms to hystero-traumatism. "What does it matter?" said Dr. Michaux, a well-known surgeon. "The lesion was everywhere, the whole organism affected. The precise name of the disease is of little importance. The result was certain, and death not far off."[1]

The moribund whom science had abandoned, and who has come to life as a result of prayer, is, they tell us, "a nervous case." Well and good. But that does not explain the sudden passage from approaching death to a state of health. Can one attribute to suggestion, or the shock produced by the icy water, that a skeleton with limbs almost deprived of muscles suddenly acquires normal movements? Will hypnosis produce in a week a considerable increase of weight, and cause a cure without convalescence or relapse? Yet these conditions are found in several cases cured at Lourdes. They are well exemplified in that of Mademoiselle Guilloteau, of Taillis, in the Vendée.[2]

Mademoiselle Ernestine Guilloteau arrived at Lourdes accompanied by accurate and precise certi-

[1] Boissarie, *Les Guérisons de Lourdes*, 2nd série, p. 42.
[2] No. 90. Register, 1908.

ficates stating that she was suffering from chronic enteritis, to which were added symptoms of chronic peritonitis. All the doctors had stated also that there were lesions of the lungs, undoubtedly tuberculous in character, and that, considering the generalisation of the trouble and the extreme emaciation, her case was incurable. When she arrived she was unable to walk, having been absolutely confined to bed for two years. She had extreme pain, which could only be calmed by injections of morphia; of this she took 12 centigrammes daily. Her weakness was extreme, her tongue covered with thrush, as happens with cachectics in the last stage. In short, her state was so grave that death appeared almost imminent.

However, during the passage of the Blessed Sacrament, which a prelate was conveying to the Grotto one morning at nine o'clock, this skeleton suddenly raised herself. She was immediately taken to the Medical Bureau. There they examined the poor girl, finding that she weighed only 24 kilogrammes, 48 pounds instead of the 120 that she weighed two years before. The doctors in the Bureau could find no evidence of either abdominal or pulmonary tubercle. She was cured, and thoroughly cured. For the last few months as nourishment she had only been able to take a little milk in small quantities, sometimes a little tea or coffee, and this was not always retained; now she could eat and digest everything. Formerly she could not move without pain; now she could walk and move without difficulty. What was very extraordinary was that the movements almost seemed to be made without muscles, for these had atrophied to such an

MLLE. ERNESTINE GUILLOTEAU (ONE YEAR AFTER CURE).

extent that they appeared almost non-existent. We all know that time, and often a considerable time, is necessary during which passive movements are made in order to overcome the weakness and stiffness of muscles which have been immobilised for some weeks, as in the case of fractures or severe sprains. In the case of Ernestine Guilloteau, immobilisation had lasted for two years: during this time she had been confined to bed, and the atrophy produced by this, together with the wasting caused by the disease, had reached an extreme degree. Nevertheless, scarcely had she been cured by the passage of the Blessed Sacrament, when she could move her legs normally—a thing which had been impossible for the last two years. Moreover, it must be noted that the muscles and the fat in the subcutaneous tissues were restored with a rapidity which was certainly abnormal. Three weeks after the examination Ernestine Guilloteau had gained 3 kilogrammes. Five months later, in April, 1909, she weighed, according to the evidence of her doctor, 46½ kilogrammes. She returned to Lourdes a year after in perfect health, having gained 66 pounds since the day of her return to life. In 1921 Mademoiselle Guilloteau presented herself at the Bureau; her health was robust, and she was full of spirits and energy, and this time she accompanied, as a nurse, a patient who was seriously ill.

In the case of Mademoiselle Guilloteau it is impossible to atribute the extreme wasting to a nervous cause. There are cases, however, where without any definite organic lesion the patients are very near death. Hysteria is sometimes accompanied by such

symptoms that the whole organic life of the body seems to be disorganised. In such a case, is a sudden return to normal health of usual occurrence? No! such a resurrection must be attributed to some force much superior to any that we can employ. The influence of the nervous system can put an end to some special symptom, but it cannot instantly restore health which had long been destroyed. There are hysterical cases which by long years of suffering are reduced to such a condition of ill-health that death is inevitable and not far off. But at Lourdes such cases are sometimes restored to health in less time than it takes to say it.

In the month of August, 1921, I had the occasion of studying such a case. It was that of a young woman, twenty-seven years of age, suffering from purely functional nervous disease. For six years Mademoiselle Pr—— had been subject to intractable vomiting; she rejected almost everything, even liquids. In consequence she presented the appearance of a veritable mummy, having literally only skin to cover her bones, as the subjoined photograph indicates. On the Rosary Esplanade during the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, on August 25, 1921, this living skeleton suddenly got up and commenced to walk. Her walk, it is true, was decidedly hesitating, as in the case of one who has lost the power of standing upright. That same evening she took a copious and varied meal.

As she presented the stigmata of hysteria, and the notes that accompanied her case stated that the vomiting could not be attributed to any definite

MLLE. PR——, AUGUST 20, 1921.

organic lesion in the stomach, the doctors at the Bureau certified that the case was certainly one of extraordinary improvement, but in the absence of any definite organic lesion such a change might be attributed to some nervous shock, some emotion or psychic influence, and so might have a natural cause. As always happens in such cases, the patient was classed as hysterical, and simply looked upon as a pathological curiosity. It is none the less true that the sudden change effected in Mademoiselle Pr—— was not only the cure of the nervous symptoms, but a profound change in her general health which was difficult to explain naturally.

In such cases it is not the cessation of the nervous symptoms, the pain, paralysis, contraction, etc., which constitutes the unusual; it is the sudden change, the brusque amelioration of the former morbid state. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the general state of health and the nervous symptoms.

Instantaneous cures of grave lesions without any relapse are sufficient reply to the sophisms of those who wish to explain all the cures at Lourdes by suggestion. *La Grivotte*, whom Zola interred as far back as 1892, survived him: she only died on August 11, 1920. Sophie Couteau, another heroine of Zola's, who was cured of caries of the bones of the foot, is now Sister Agnes of the Little Sisters of the Assumption; she has always remained well. Marie Lemarchand, the Elise Roquet of the novelist, became Madame Authier; she had a family of ten children, and brought them up as excellent Catholics.

Zola's bad faith and the lies he told about the

cures he had witnessed have had a result diametrically opposite to that which the novelist desired. Perhaps his book and the details he has given about the three persons we have mentioned may have upset the convictions of some and caused doubts in the minds of others; but, on the whole, the result of this work has been to call the attention of numbers to Lourdes and the cures that are worked there. His work has led to our sanctuaries many doctors and men of science. The impious attempt of the novelist has in the long run increased both the evidence for the supernatural and the glory of God.

VI

It can be easily understood that the enemies of Lourdes, in order to explain the facts, made much use of the term *suggestion*.

The word "suggestion" dispensed embarrassing questions from being investigated; it permitted a solution being found without study or discussion; the supernatural was denied by entrenching behind so-called infallible science. "It is a case of hysteria, of suggestion." This was supposed to be the final verdict of science, and these words, mysterious to the lay mind, having even a vague, ill-defined meaning to those who had not specialised in nervous diseases, closed the subject, rendering further investigation superfluous.

By affirming suggestion, this so-called science runs counter to its own theories. If all the cures at Lourdes are of psychic origin and depend upon suggestion,

why does suggestion work such wonderful works at Lourdes only after the apparitions of 1858, and always in conjunction with fervent prayer? If all the sick who are cured at Lourdes are neurotic, how is it that we only obtain a limited number of cures amongst the great number of such cases which they allege are present there?

Again, if we possess at the Grotto such exceptional means of suggestion, how is it that at the Bureau we inscribe in our archives cures of pulmonary, osseous, and articular tuberculosis; of cancer, blindness, etc.—maladies where suggestion can do little or nothing; cases, too, which are easily controlled?

Those who obstinately deny our cures and refuse discussion are impossible to convince. They will not accept the evidence of facts. The followers of the suggestion hypothesis are, at least, adversaries whom we may try to refute.

Suggestion, imagination, nervous influences, have never possessed the property of regenerating organic tissue. I have already referred to the laws which govern these changes. Such reparation can only occur after a definite time, by successive changes, by means of cell multiplication. This multiplication, caused by the older cells and in conjunction with them, reforms the skin, muscles, connective tissue, bones, etc. All these tissue changes are brought about by means of material conveyed by the blood, which had obtained them from the food by complicated digestive processes. In this succession of physiological operations the question of time is an indispensable one. This is an unalterable law. To assert that an emotion, a

moral shock, can create cells of all the necessary varieties, is to admit heresy.

It is possible that imagination may modify to some extent the laws which preside over the regeneration of tissues, but it cannot run absolutely counter to these laws; that would be to deny firmly established biological principles.

Here is a spring, without medicinal qualities, which puts an end to phthisis, the various manifestations of the tuberculous diathesis, to cancer, etc., and the action of this water is practically instantaneous. These cures occur in those full of faith and confidence, also in those who do not believe, and have not asked to be cured. Is it reasonable, then, to attribute the curative effect of Lourdes water to the exaltation produced by faith and the influence of suggestion?

Children of only a few months or years cannot be cured by suggestion; they cry, scream, and struggle when they are plunged into the icy water. Can we believe that they are under the influence of the "faith which cures," and that they suggest to themselves the idea of a cure? It is the same with those unfortunate patients who depart from Lourdes as ill as they arrived. Are they still under the influence of suggestion when sometimes their malady is cured during the return journey in the train or when they reach home?

I will cite an example of one of these cures which was obtained beyond the influence of those intermediary agents to which cure is usually assigned, a cure which took place when all suggestion or hope of cure was non-existent.

It occurred in the case of a young woman belonging

MLLE. IRÈNE SALIN OF MOURIÈS (BOUCHES DU RHÔNE),
AUGUST 23, 1921.

to the Pilgrimage of Provence. Despite her great desire to be cured, she left Lourdes without any signs of amelioration. As is usually the case, she was calm, resigned, and submissive, but confident in spite of everything. Her firm trust in our blessed Lady, however, was that she would finally yield to her prayers and supplications, and *cure her another year* on the occasion of a new pilgrimage.

MADEMOISELLE IRÈNE SALIN, *aged twenty-one, of Mouriès (Bouches-du-Rhône). (Dossier No.* 24, 1921.)[1] *Pott's disease cured during the return journey.*

To obtain permission to join the 49th National Pilgrimage, Mademoiselle Irène Salin presented the following certificate from Dr. Pierre Cot, of Maussanne (Bouches-du-Rhône):

"I, the undersigned, Pierre Cot, doctor of the Faculty of Montpellier, living at Maussanne, declare and certify that I have had under my care for two years Mademoiselle Irène Salin, suffering from Pott's disease in the lumbar region. Actually the patient presents evidence of disease in the last three lumbar vertebræ, with persistent pain in the whole of that region. She has to wear a plaster corset, after almost two years of the 'gouttière.' Improvement is very slow.

"(*Signed*) DR. COT.

"*July* 4, 1921."

[1] *Journal de la Grotte,* December 4, 1921.

In delivering this certificate, our colleague did not conceal from her family the dangers that might possibly occur from a journey to Lourdes. "As a matter of fact," he said, "this patient ought not to be moved, and the proof is that I refused her visiting her father at Salon. However, in face of the express wish of the patient, and her great hopes of being cured, I have allowed her to undertake the journey. I, however, make one precaution, a *sine qua non*—Mademoiselle Irène must be transported swung in her 'gouttière' to Arles, where she joins the pilgrimage train. There again, if it is in any way possible, she must be transported in the same manner. I affirm, speaking as a medical man, that she should not travel otherwise." The doctor also added that he could not allow the patient to remove her plaster splint for immersion in the piscine.

Despite all the precautions, Mademoiselle Salin suffered very much during the journey to Lourdes. On her arrival on Thursday, August 18, 1921, she was taken to the Hospital of St. Frais, the slightest shock causing very considerable pain.

Some hours later she was completely immersed in the piscine, but after this only local applications of the water were made, as the movements involved in the immersion were too painful. On August 22, however, the evening before her departure, the formal wish of the patient was granted that she should again be bathed, and this wish was granted without any result ensuing.

On Tuesday, August 23, the train for Provence left Lourdes, taking Mademoiselle Salin, uncured, but

fully resigned to the will of God, and still confident. "The blessed Virgin will cure me, you will see," she said, and this she repeated several times, but by this she only intended to say that she hoped to be cured the following year when she returned to Lourdes a second time.

As the train approached Toulouse she suddenly felt better, and asked permission of her mother to leave her splint and take some steps in the corridor of the carriage. This was granted, and Mademoiselle Salin walked a little without feeling any pain or fatigue. Replaced in her splint, she slept soundly until her arrival at Montpellier; for three years she had not slept like this.

The following morning, August 24, on arriving at Nîmes, Irène jumped from her compartment, and visited some friends in an adjoining carriage, mounting again into her own compartment without help, even though she was wearing her plaster corset.

At Arles she got out, followed by her "gouttière," which was carried behind her, and seated herself in the vehicle which was to convey her the 25 kilometres which separated her from Mouriès.

During this journey her carriage was passed by the car of Dr. Cot, who was absolutely stupefied to see his patient without her splint, asserting that she was cured.

On Friday, August 26, our colleague visited the patient at home: at her request he removed the splint, and testified to the absolute disappearance of every morbid symptom.

Three weeks later, on September 14, Dr. Cot drew up the following declaration:

"Mademoiselle Irène Salin, aged twenty-one, suffering from Pott's disease in the lumbo-sacral region, was put in a Bonnet's splint from March, 1919, to June, 1920; then, as painful symptoms still persisted and walking was impossible, a plaster corset was applied, which she wore from April 5, 1921, to August 26 of the same year.

"*At that date* I removed the plaster corset, and state, that then *Mademoiselle Salin presented none of the classical signs of Pott's disease.* The movements of antero- and postero-flexion of the spine, as well as the lateral movements, were perfectly free and painless. The patient walked without pain, and felt no fatigue therefrom.

"*I am obliged to avow*, with all the impartiality which certificates of this kind ought to have, that *it is impossible to explain otherwise than supernaturally such a complete and rapid cure.*

"As a testimony to which I have given the present certificate.

"(*Signed*) DR. COT."

The illness from which Mademoiselle Salin suffered was undoubtedly Pott's disease. The diagnosis was confirmed by Dr. Jourdain, of Marseilles, who advised the Bonnet splint. The same diagnosis was made by Dr. Eynard, of Marseilles, after a radiograph had been taken. Finally, when the "gouttière" was removed Drs. Bec and Tartanssen of Airgnon applied the plaster corset.

The affection, then, from which Mademoiselle Salin suffered was *attested by five doctors, who based their opinion upon the radiographic proof.*

The evidence of the first certificate, followed by the detailed report of the patient made by the doctor treating the case, permit us, then, to affirm the cure, which has since been completely maintained. The rapidity of the cure authorises us to affirm that it cannot be explained medically. The circumstances in which it was produced preclude nervous influences.

At the Procession on the Rosary Esplanade, and before the Grotto, without the action of any intermediary agent, we see the instantaneous cure of organic lesions, wounds, fractures, caries, tumours, just as in the piscines. It is well recognised to-day that suggestion cannot produce similar results.

Charcot, despite his confidence in the "faith which cures" (a faith which, however, never cured a cancer before the appearance of the miraculous spring at Lourdes), admits absolutely that tissue lesions, lesions with loss of substance, require a definite time, varying in length, for their cure.

The chief of the Nancy School, Bernheim himself, recognised that suggestion has limits in its power of action. He acknowledged that suggestion could not act directly on a diseased organ "to restore the elements of a tissue either destroyed or invaded by a new growth," and declared that hypno-suggestive treatment only succeeded in a very limited number of cases.

According to Babinsky, we must doubt as to many

of the symptoms which were formerly regarded as hysterical. "All medical men recognise that the domain of hysteria has been inordinately extended, and that the power of hysteria to reproduce the most diverse maladies has been considerably exaggerated."[1]

According to this author, grave errors of diagnosis are frequently made, by considering as hysterical symptoms which are those of definite organic trouble. Hæmoptyses, hæmatemeses, hæmaturia, fever—all these symptoms have been observed in hysterical subjects, and considered as hysterical by skilful practitioners, who discovered later that these symptoms were definitely organic. To-day "*it is recognised that circulatory, secretory, trophic troubles, as well as hæmorrhages and anuria, cannot be produced solely by suggestion.*"[2]

If this is true, then the hæmatemesis which characterises ulcer of the stomach cannot be regarded as a neurosis, and the many cases of this affection cured at Lourdes cannot be attributed to suggestion, any more than the cures of other organic lesions of which our archives contain such a number.

We are told that the settings of the stage at Lourdes —the candles, the invocations, the various ceremonies —exert a curative influence which explains all the supernatural happenings. To this we reply, that the adversaries of the supernatural can, if they are so minded, imitate all this. They can invoke Nature the omnipotent, light candles, and make magnificent

[1] *Démembrement de l'hystérie traditionelle. Pithiatisme*, p. 4. Imprimerie de la *Semaine Médicale.*

[2] Babinsky, *ibid.*, p. 12.

MLLE. VALENTINE GOUGAUD OF RENNES, JUNE 15, 1921.

processions in their hospitals and asylums; still, they will never obtain similar results.

It is asserted that all the sick cured at Lourdes are hysterical or neurotic. It must be admitted, however, that a very special dose of good-will is necessary to include in such categories the cases of Louis Thurel, Juliette Nancey, and Ernestine Guilloteau, whose notes we have given.

Neurotic cavities in the lungs have yet to be discovered, and hysteria has not yet produced fractures, tubercular joint disease, and cancer.

It must be admitted that it is difficult to see "suggestion" in the following sudden and radical cure, which I published in the month of June, 1921 :[1]

MADEMOISELLE VALENTINE GOUGAUD, OF RENNES, *aged twenty-seven.* (*Register No. 7*, 1921.)—From infancy she had very poor health; amongst her ailments tuberculous manifestations figure prominently. She has had pneumonia, broncho-pneumonia, pleurisy, frequent attacks of bronchitis, meningitic symptoms, scarlet fever, influenza, appendicitis, with peritoneal trouble.

With such a history it is easy to understand that this young girl had little strength, and yet, despite her marked wasting, Mademoiselle Gougaud, immediately there was any amelioration in her health, recommenced her work. She continued as long as possible in her work in a grocery establishment, and when this was impossible took the post of cashier in another situation. After her operation for appendicitis

[1] *Journal de la Grotte*, June 19, 1921.

in 1916, Mademoiselle Gougaud commenced to have much pain in the left hip; this necessitated a long rest in the country, when she was either lying in bed or on a long invalid chair.

At Rennes the diagnosis of *coxalgia* was made, and she was sent to the Roskoff Institute. The diagnosis was here confirmed, and an immobilising plaster splint applied, which was worn for eight months. During the two following months the treatment consisted in baths and extension by the aid of a weight of 5 kilogrammes. This treatment led to some improvement, but the patient was not allowed to sit up or to bend the knee.

Despite her precarious condition, she recommenced work in the beginning of 1918, and continued until October.

During that month she had a grave attack of broncho-pneumonia, which incapacitated her for six weeks. At the end of this attack she had considerable pain in the cervico-dorsal region of the spine. However, she recommenced work in December, suffering much pain in the hip and spine; at the same time she could not hold herself upright, and was unable to raise the head. After treatment by cauterisation along the length of the vertebral column, Dr. Augier, the patient's medical man, who was chief surgeon at the Hospital and Clinic of St. Yves, at Rennes, showed her to several colleagues at the hospital, and also to six practitioners, three of whom were surgeons. The diagnosis of Pott's disease was confirmed, and the advice given that the patient should enter the hospital and an immobilising apparatus be applied.

In July, 1919, Mademoiselle Gougaud entered the hospital at St Yves, and was immediately put in a plaster corset, which was left on for two months. At the end of this time, loss of consciousness, vomiting, and meningitic symptoms occurred, for which ice was applied to the head. When the patient was a little better from this, she had a very violent pain in the cervical region.

After a month and a half a third change of the plaster corset was made. The slightest movement of the body now caused intense pain; her sufferings were so acute that injections of morphia had to be given for their relief.

The journey to Lourdes was made in June, 1921. The getting the patient into the train, and also the journey, caused much pain. In addition to the spinal disease, there was much pain in the left knee, which could not be flexed at all.

Mademoiselle Gougaud arrived at Lourdes on June 14 with the following certificate:

"Mademoiselle Valentine Gougaud, who has been under my care for the last two years, is suffering from Pott's disease of the cervical spine, which has necessitated the application of a plaster corset. At the present time the disease is in active progress, and the general health is very precarious.

"(*Signed*) DR. AUGIER.

"RENNES,
"*April* 5, 1921."

On Wednesday, June 15, at nine o'clock in the morning, at the moment when the apparatus was removed to allow of her immersion, she had much

pain, and at the same time a strange sensation of collapse; then, without knowing exactly how, she raised herself in the water.

From this moment all pain and suffering disappeared. However, the apparatus was re-applied, and Mademoiselle Gougaud was taken to the Grotto, where she felt herself to be very much better; but she did not wish to declare herself cured, deciding that she would not definitely believe in it until she was able to walk.

In the afternoon at the second bath she did not experience any pain, but felt a great sense of well-being; in addition, her knee, which had been rigidly extended, was capable of flexion.

A little later, at the Procession, she was much agitated and moved, but persevered in her resolution not to say anything as to the disappearance of her symptoms, from fear that perhaps after all her cure was not a real one.

At the hospital that evening Mademoiselle Gougaud sat without difficulty on the edge of her bed; to shake hands with one of her neighbours she walked with assistance to her, then with the help of one of the Religious she made the tour of the ward, greeting the various patients. After this she had strength enough to rise again and greet the director of the pilgrimage. She then made an excellent meal, the first for many months, for up to this time she had only been able to take milk by means of a feeding-cup, the daily amount being scarcely a litre (a pint and a half). She passed a very good night, not having taken, as she always had done previously, some cachets of chloral, without

which she had been unable to sleep. On Thursday morning, June 16, Mademoiselle Gougaud was conducted to the Bureau, where she raised herself easily from her stretcher, and walked without assistance, hesitating, however, a little like one who has lost the habit of walking.

Her examination at the Bureau was entrusted to Drs. Petitpierre, of Hyères, and Piroult, of Rennes, who gave the following report:

"(1) The vertebral column shows no deformity in the cervical region. All the movements are made with ease and without pain. There is no muscular contraction.

"(2) The left knee shows no deformity. Flexion is incomplete, and just passes the right angle.

"(3) There is some slight pain in the left hip on flexing the thigh on the pelvis, and this flexion is arrested at 110 degrees. The movement of adduction has half its amplitude, and is not painful.

"(4) The shortening of the left leg, which according to the witnesses interrogated was $2\frac{1}{2}$ centimetres, is only apparent and due to a bending of the vertebral column.

"(5) Despite the history of lung trouble, respiration is normal. There are no râles or other adventitious signs. Percussion shows normal resonance.

"Conclusions:

"(1) The illness has really existed.

"(2) There is an absolute cure of the Pott's disease in the cervical region, and an evident amelioration of the hip disease.

"(3) The cure, considering its rapidity, cannot be attributed to a natural process."

P.S.—At the examination made on the following day, Friday, June 17, the coxalgia was much im proved. The movements of the hip were normal. The only thing remaining was that the left knee could not be completely flexed.

This case of Mademoiselle Gougaud seems to me to rest on a base which is scientifically impregnable. The diagnosis of vertebral caries made by the surgeon of the hospital, whose competence cannot be doubted, was also confirmed by six other doctors, three of whom were surgical specialists; and it was also confirmed by a radiograph. At the Bureau the disappearance of all the symptoms was attested.

This is not all, however. Dr. Augier, who had her under his charge in the Hospital and Clinic of St Yves for three years, and who examined her before her departure for Lourdes, did not lose sight of her after the cure. He followed it attentively, obtained new radiographs, and published in the *Semaine Religieuse* of the Diocese of Rennes (February 18) the following account:

"Mademoiselle Gougaud was cured at Lourdes on June 15, 1921, of a grave affection of the vertebral column which had lasted for two years. All the doctors who had seen the patient from the time of her entry at the Hospital of St Yves declared that she was suffering from Pott's disease of the cervical spine. This was also my opinion, which was confirmed by the facts noticed during two years' treatment. When

she left for Lourdes, I gave her a certificate, but purposely said nothing of the hip disease from which she had suffered, but had been cured for some time, some lameness being left with marked stiffness of the left hip and knee.

"Scarcely had the patient returned to Rennes cured, when people began to question the diagnosis before me, even going so far as to say that she suffered only from a nervous affection.

"My personal conviction, both as to the diagnosis of the disease and its cure, was quite definite. In face, however, of the criticisms that had been formulated, I resolved to observe the patient closely for another six months, at the expiration of which the cure would have been tested by time.

"I imposed silence on the patient, and also on the Religious who had nursed her. For myself this silence was very trying, seeing the erroneous interpretations which had been put upon the cure.

"To-day, after six months, my conclusions are as follows:

"(1) Mademoiselle Gougaud has remained absolutely cured for six months. There is no sign of any disease of the vertebral column, and the radiograph shows complete integrity of the cervical region.

"(2) The stiffness of the hip and knee has disappeared. There only remains very slight limitation of movement and lameness.

"(3) I have never noticed in this patient any signs of functional nervous trouble.

"(*Signed*) DR. AUGIER.

"*December* 15, 1921."

Are not these observations satisfactory? They embrace notes, verifications, and continued observation, which destroy absolutely the hypothesis of suggestion in this cure.

As a matter of fact, at the present day the legend of nervous cures at Lourdes ought to be abandoned, for it is upheld only by the ignorant, or by opponents who are in bad faith. But if little by little the theory of suggestion has been abandoned, it is the fashion now to explain the cures at Lourdes naturally by the intervention of "*unknown forces*" of Nature. The objection of unbelievers now is that, before concluding that it is God who has, for example, cured a fracture instantaneously, we must be certain that there do not exist natural forces which are capable of producing this wonderful result. But if this is the case, one can never be sure of anything! When I prescribe some remedy for a patient of mine, I have the certainty that in the ordinary dose it will not cause harm, and will produce a certain definite effect, because this remedy, according to experience, always produces the same results. But if this were not the case, what would not be my hesitation and apprehension, if I imagined that it might produce effects according to some unknown law, capable perhaps of doing exactly the contrary of what happens ordinarily, and so gravely compromising the life of my patient? If such a thing did happen, it would certainly be a derogation from natural law, and I should be perfectly correct in describing it as extra-natural.

Again, nothing, absolutely nothing, authorises us to admit the hypothesis of natural forces which we shall

only learn about at some future date. The structure of the organs of the human body, and of the functions which preside over these organs, has never changed, and never will change. Structure and function are presided over by immutable laws. Other laws cannot possibly come and change the normal structure or function of the bodily organism.

It is true that there are still discoveries which demonstrate that Science has not yet said its last word. But what we call laws, definite conclusions drawn from the results of experience, are immutable. It cannot possibly be admitted that at some future date some discovery shall overturn our knowledge of to-day, for that has never happened since the world has been a world. If some new law were capable of destroying some old law, this would also be the destruction of the sciences of chemistry, physics, and mechanics. We shall find, perhaps, unknown forces which will enable us to understand phenomena up to now inexplicable, but the new laws which gradually become known will not contradict the old ones. A natural force so far unknown was revealed to us in the discovery both of radium and X-rays. But how has this changed the old law that luminous rays coming from the sun cannot traverse opaque bodies? Some new law will never give this power to solar rays. Nothing can do violence to Nature, whose laws seem at times harsh and pitiless. Against these natural laws Science is powerless, but what Science is incapable of doing is easily possible to the omnipotence of the Creator, who at Lourdes totally reverses at times these natural laws.

Moreover, those who invoke unknown forces, do not they themselves acknowledge that, by employing this term to avoid the supernatural, they precisely recognise that the cures at Lourdes are produced *outside the laws* of Nature? We do not say anything else when we affirm the possibility of the "miraculous."

Let us admit for one moment that there may be some unknown force or forces which produce the extraordinary effects that are seen at Lourdes. These forces would necessarily in their origin and mode of action operate so that experience would show that they invariably produced the same results. Well, then, I argue that this force, which as yet we do not know, but which exists, has the power by means of the water of the piscines to cure a case of suppurating disease of the hip-joint. But if it is a definite law that governs this unknown force, then surely other cases of suppurating disease of the hip-joint ought to be cured with immersion in the miraculous water and with similar prayers.

As a matter of fact, cures of the most diverse maladies occur in the water at Lourdes, but at the unexpected moment, and without the slightest regularity. It is the same at the Procession; the same with matter-of-fact adults; the same with young children, where suggestion has no part.

VII

It is also evident that cures occur at Lourdes which at first sight seem from their rapidity to be extraordinary, but which nevertheless present no miraculous character. God can cure a disease at any stage of its manifestations. But there are cases where the return to health has been an exceptional grace, a favour accorded to fervent prayer without the cure being necessarily miraculous *from the medical point of view*, and this because it presents nothing contrary to the findings of Science nor the laws of Nature. Such cures can be obtained elsewhere than at the Grotto of Lourdes. The surrounding crowds, however, in presence of what seem to them surprising facts, give them an exaggerated importance, and much too quickly regard them as supernatural. The doctors, however, cannot consider or declare them to be such, because it is impossible to affirm scientifically that the cure could not have taken place in some other place at some other time and without any supernatural intervention.

Here, for instance, is a patient whose treatment has been rest in bed for several months. This prolonged immobilisation has made the various functional symptoms gradually disappear. Naturally the time arrives when the patient is free from the symptoms, and is perfectly capable of getting up and walking. Nothing, however, has given this certitude, and she continues to remain in bed, firmly convinced that it is impossible to make the necessary effort. At Lourdes, however, suddenly under the influence of

emotion this effort is made. The patient rises and pronounces the words which all are desirous to hear: "I am cured." Immediately great excitement takes place around her—an excitement it is necessary to have witnessed to have an idea of. "A miracle! A miracle! Hosanna! Hosanna!" cries the crowd.

At such a moment nobody wishes to think that the patient is deceived, and that she takes her ardent wish for a cure as a genuine reality. Consequently, when the calmer medical men examine the case, and pronounce that a definite opinion cannot be passed without further enquiry, or perhaps state that the cure or amelioration is susceptible of a natural explanation, immediately the crowd shows signs of disapproval. Noisy protestations are made by those who believed and said that the patient had been miraculously cured.

The patient could not walk—she walks. This child was dumb—and talks now. This man was blind—he sees. This paralysed woman has recovered the complete use of her limbs. Where is the need for discussion, enquiry, further observation? What necessity to wait? The result is there—what more do they want? There is no necessity for big scientific words, for explanations in an incomprehensible language: the miracle is clear, dazzlingly evident! It does not need to be a doctor to see it. Hosanna!

Too often it happens that either the family, the benefactors of the patient, or the directors of the pilgrimage to which the patient belonged, noisily express their belief and joy; they chant the *Magnificat*, acclaim the "miraculé," organise ceremonies of thanksgiving on returning to their parish—all

before the supposed cure has been recognised by the competent authorities, or has been subjected to the test of time.

Frequently also the Press, and above all the Catholic Press, in its desire to serve the good cause and announce the news, acts with a rapidity which is not without danger: it publishes some sensational fact, broadcasting it over the country, without either criticism, discussion, or official confirmation. Thus the reality of some supernatural cure is accepted on totally inadequate grounds, and before it has been passed and admitted as such by the medical body.

In such conditions it is easy to see that the enemies of religion and the supernatural have an easy triumph, when in the place of the miraculously cured whom they expected, whose advent had been announced by enthusiastic pilgrims or prematurely by the Press, they see some person arrive who is either not cured at all, or only partially so, or who has never been absolutely normal. From some such prematurely announced or absolutely false fact, many jump to the conclusion that the miracles of Lourdes are either imaginative, or the products of superstition or fraud, and forthwith proceed to throw discredit and suspicion upon the medical body at the Bureau.

It is very clear that a vigorous control must be constantly exercised with regard to all the cures obtained at Lourdes, so that public opinion may not be deceived. It is not less necessary to proceed always with caution and deliberation.

At Lourdes it is rare that medical evidence is present at the precise moment that a wound cicatrises,

a fracture consolidates, or some moribund abruptly returns to health.

The certification or verification of a cure cannot be suddenly made. Generally the doctors have only before them some patient who avers that now he is well, and has passed from extreme illness to a state of health.

To support and confirm this statement, the medical experts must conduct careful and scrupulous enquiries, and it is absolutely necessary for them to base their opinion on irrefutable documents, on trustworthy evidence, so that they may be capable of refuting all objections.

This has been the precise end for which the Medical Bureau was established in 1882.

CHAPTER III

THE MEDICAL BUREAU

The rôle of the Bureau—Faith and Science—Dr. de St Maclou—Dr. Boissarie—The Bureau at the present day—Dr. Cox—Voluntary collaborators—The work shared by all the doctors—Enquiries—The official reports—Public meetings—Discussions—Continued careful study—Conscience and good faith—The change in medical opinion—The publication of cures—Reply to the critics—The Bureau cannot be a hospital clinic.

"Those doctors and students who enter the Medical Bureau should first salute the statue of St Luke as they go to take up their work of charity. Having done this, they will only lower the banner of Science before Truth itself: for Science is of men, whilst Truth is from God."—Dr. Feron-Vrau: *Address to the Catholic Medical Faculty of Lille.*

I

THE rôle of the Medical Bureau is first and foremost to establish and demonstrate the extraordinary and extra-natural character of the cures at Lourdes. The enquiry as to the cause of these cures, and the affirmation of their supernatural character, is the affair of the ecclesiastical authorities. It seems to me that this gives a perfect security to those scientific men who refuse to enter the domain of the miraculous: it gives them a guarantee which should incite them not to hold aloof from the work of examination to which they are cordially invited.

The number of sick who come to implore their cure

is a constantly growing one. In the interests of research and truth, it is necessary to furnish means of study, control, and evidence, in order to combat unbelieving critics and those who are in bad faith.

Renan maintained that scientific proof of a miracle could not be obtained. "The supernatural does not exist! Consequently a miracle is impossible." But the miraculous nevertheless shows itself most clearly on the banks of the Gave, despite the protests of so-called Science. Faith will discuss the matter with Science, which latter demands evidence and proof, although it is often with the hope that definite proof will not be forthcoming.

To do this Faith has not asked Science to meet her in the Universities, nor at the reunions of learned societies; she has asked her instead to come and discuss the matter courteously with her at the foot of the Grotto. There Faith claims to be victorious, and to compel her adversary to submit to the evidence, she demands that both believers and unbelievers shall come to see for themselves, shall study the facts on the spot. She does not reject any criticism, any discussion, but promises to give Science, if she on her part is loyal, scientific proof of the reality of the supernatural and its effects. Faith will herself enlighten her at this well-spring of the supernatural, with a light capable of dissipating the most obstinate prejudices.

Those who follow Renan by denying the supernatural, for the most part are ignorant of the fact that there exists at Lourdes a veritable clinic, open to all and unique in the world for the number and variety

of pathological cases which can be observed there, where each one has the right and the possibility of making acquaintance with and studying the supernatural: this clinic is the Medical Bureau.

It was in 1885 by the help of Providence that a Catholic doctor, as retiring as he was learned, by founding the Medical Bureau, began that work which has allowed the incredulous to come in contact with the manifestations of the supernatural.

This strange institution, this extraordinary clinic, had its birth, to begin with, in a modest wooden hut close to the piscines. There it was that up to the year 1891 Dr. de St Maclou conducted the first enquiries into the cures obtained by the intercession of the Queen of Heaven. Assisted only by some priest or Religious who served as secretary and entered the certificates in a primitive register, Dr. de St Maclou alone was responsible for the examinations and the conclusions arrived at. Little by little other doctors began to arrive, drawn either by curiosity, or later by the desire of explaining naturally these cures, which became more and more numerous.

In this way they began the study which has upset all their theories. In 1892, when the late Dr. Boissarie succeeded to the post of Dr. de St Maclou, more than 150 doctors had visited the Bureau during the course of that summer; and now for thirty years these cures have been the subject of minute enquiry, of serious and conscientious investigation, and are subjected to the most rigorous control.

Dr. Boissarie, who was so well known by sight to all who visited Lourdes, and whose name is known

throughout the world, directed the Bureau for thirty years, with a loyalty and professional skill which were universally recognised.

This excellent master, who was justly called "the Judge of the Supernatural," died piously at over eighty years of age on June 28, 1917.

The Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, Monsignor Schoepfer, in collaboration with my colleague, Dr. Le Bec, the President of the Society of St Luke, entrusted me with the task of succeeding him, who had so sympathetically welcomed my help during a number of years, and for whom I shall always preserve the most affectionate respect.

I desire here to thank Monsignor the Bishop most sincerely for the confidence he has shown me in appointing me to this arduous post.

To-day the Medical Bureau has a comfortable and spacious installation beneath the north ramp of the Rosary alongside the offices of the Hospitality. The room where the examinations are held is surmounted by a statue of St Luke.

Here the two doctors who are in charge of the Bureau are installed, assisted by their devoted colleague Dr. Cox, who for more than twenty-five years has been the unwearied secretary of our Lady of Lourdes. They would be insufficient for the work, owing to the enormous number of cases and the visits of so many medical men to the international clinic of Lourdes, were they not assisted by numbers of these colleagues, many of them well known for their science, who lend their aid and take an active part in the work. Under the direction of the President and

DR. BOISSARIE

Vice-President, these visiting doctors proceed themselves to make the official enquiries.

II

So many patients present themselves, either to testify to their cure or to bring proof that it has stood the test of time, that the Medical Bureau constitutes, as it were, a veritable court of the miraculous, where all ages, classes, and varieties of disease are represented. During the summer months of each year our Bureau offers medical men a most interesting field of study. With us it is impossible to specialise; one can never see in advance the work that it will be necessary to undertake. The most interesting cases present themselves when they are least expected. The personnel examining the cases changes very frequently, and so we have successively fresh doctors analysing facts, discussing objections, verifying evidence and deducing conclusions.

In the majority of the cases the cures are studied by doctors having no official connection with the Bureau; they embrace experienced general practitioners, well-known professors, specialists, etc., whose names are invariably inscribed in our registers, and whose good faith cannot for one moment be called in question.

Not infrequently the examinations are made by the doctors who have had the patient under their care during the malady in question. In this case we demand full particulars from them, and in return give our unbiased opinion, so that in a measure they are constrained to control the reports that are published

concerning their patients. By this method of procedure the Bureau is freed from being under the influence of any school or dominating personality, and its declarations thus have a very definite scientific value.

In our enquiries we continually do our best to obtain precision and accuracy. We look into all the evidence, examine all who are competent to express an opinion, neglect no clue, and especially value the explanation and remarks given by the practitioner who has had charge of the case.

Thus the history of each patient and each cure is not only recorded in our Bureau, but also by the visiting medical men, who establish it by the most precise details.

At Lourdes during the pilgrimages there are not only the doctors officially attached to the pilgrimages, but others also are called to give their opinion on the cures. They may perhaps be chance visitors, or have come expressly to carry out researches. Definite conclusions are never arrived at in the Bureau without asking the opinion of all the doctors who are present.

As we said before, we have sometimes the doctor who has had the case under treatment, who has followed its whole evolution, and has ineffectually done his best to stay the progress of the disease. After the cure the patient's doctor is asked to formulate his opinion and give a definite conclusion.

The Medical Bureau commences by making a careful winnowing of all the facts presented for its examination. It verifies and classes the evidence, questions and examines the patients. If the slightest doubt exists, appeal is made to well-known specialists

THE BUREAU DES CONSTATATIONS MÉDICALES.

or professors. Later on the doctors not attached to the Bureau, those who have treated the patient at home, occupy themselves with the case.

It is surely permissible to declare that our enquiries are conducted with the strictest impartiality, and with the same conscientious exactitude that is required for the various observations which are the bases of our clinical and biological studies. The basis is not an idea, an abstraction; it rests on the solid ground of real facts definitely and scientifically demonstrated. The conclusions arrived at in the clinic of Lourdes are destined to bring out the "supernatural" factor in these cures. One case only of this sort, if it is scientifically demonstrated to be obtained outside the limits of natural law, is sufficient to prove the possibility of the miraculous. Consequently the Medical Bureau fills a rôle which is of capital importance, since it demonstrates the presence of "supernatural" facts, and as a result annihilates the rationalistic thesis.

It is sufficient to have once assisted at one of the séances at the Bureau at Lourdes to be convinced that the sole thing sought there is the truth: everything is done openly and conscientiously. The miraculous is not sought for; the idea is not to multiply supernatural facts—in fact, every effort is made to remove everything which is at all suspicious; to be accepted the supernatural must be clearly and certainly evident. With anything doubtful judgement is always suspended for as long a time as is necessary. Suspect or doubtful cases are formally rejected; cases not presenting evidence of the supernatural are dismissed without discussion.

At the Bureau the first depositions of the witnesses are recorded, the certificates brought by the sick are verified; then the patients themselves are examined, and from all this a definite report is drawn up, which, together with the patient, the practitioners present examine and discuss.

All medical men without respect of nationality or religious belief have only to knock at the door of the Bureau, and give evidence that they are medical men, to be at once invited to enter and examine the cases. The question of the miraculous is not mentioned, no one is asked to believe in the supernatural. They are simply invited to give their advice as clinicians; they are told: "Here is a definite fact. Do you recognise its existence? If not, speak no more about the subject. If you do, state whether or no traces of the old malady exist. If not, can you explain *naturally* this sudden and complete cure?" If the experts are unanimous, well and good. If only in a considerable majority, then time must confirm the cure before it is declared to be supernatural. What better guarantees can be required?

I have before mentioned that all the doctors are asked to give their help in examining the patients. If we ourselves examine the cases, I am of opinion that we should not take a preponderating part; our aim should be, above all, to preside over the debates, to register the opinions of those we have designated to examine the cases, and after they have come to a conclusion, then to announce the definite decision of the Bureau.

If the cases were studied, controlled, and published

solely by doctors permanently attached to Lourdes—living and having their being, so to speak, in an atmosphere of the supernatural—then their conclusions might perhaps reasonably be called in question. But what particularly characterises the Bureau is that the various judgements are given after conscientious examinations by medical men coming from all parts; each year we can cite the presence of various professors, members of hospital staffs, specialists, and old hospital residents (*internes*).

During 1920 a Swiss medical man, on leaving here, remarked to me that the time he had spent at the Medical Bureau had been a revelation to him. "In Switzerland," said this good colleague, "scientific circles are generally convinced that what takes place at Lourdes is either commonplace or not worth attention. They believe that the examination of the patients and the making out of the reports are entrusted to one or two doctors, whose good faith they do not impugn, but they assert that they are so under the influence of their surroundings that they are inclined to see the miraculous everywhere. You have enabled me to convince myself that this opinion is absolutely false, since for the most part during the time that I have been at the Bureau, the cases have been studied by doctors who have been visiting Lourdes. All you demand is loyalty, and you have been so impartially careful and scrupulous as to make our reports the official conclusions of the Bureau. I leave with the conviction that at Lourdes all the examinations are conducted most carefully and conscientiously, and shall most certainly

make my opinion known when I return to Switzerland."

The same language practically was used to me in the case of a Protestant lady doctor. In my opinion such statements as these should convince the most sceptical; they constitute a most practical testimonial as to the value of our clinic, which is still too little known to the scientific world.

The doctors we ask at Lourdes to assist us are not colleagues who are known to us; they are not practitioners already convinced. They are of diverse creeds. We simply ask them to examine because they happen to be present. Amongst them there are some whose names carry authority, whose evidence cannot be possibly called in question. When they recognise that the results we obtain at Lourdes go counter to all experience, and do not coincide with results ordinarily met with, it is impossible to believe that they have also been influenced in every case by suggestion, that they are in error when they state they have witnessed instantaneous cures of such and such an organic disease.

When a cure occurs, the examination of that case is entrusted to a certain number of medical men, either chosen haphazard, or according to their speciality amongst those present, and they may belong to any school of thought, creed, or nationality. They examine with care the antecedents, the history of the case, its cure. They search out all the evidence capable of leading to certitude, and essay to base their judgement on certain proofs.

Having each made up their mind according to the examination of the patient, witnesses, documents,

certificates, etc., a report is drawn up; this is then read before the rest of the doctors present.

The case is then generally discussed, each being free to give his opinion as to the conclusion to be adopted. In 1920 I drew up a definite formula comprising the following questions, to which all were asked to reply by either Yes or No:

I. Did the disease really exist?

II. Has there been an absolute cure? Or only an evident amelioration?

III. Is there any reason to postpone the conclusion?

IV. Can the cure be attributed to natural means?

Thus each case of cure is submitted to a study where discussion and cross-examination can be exercised.

III

It is perfectly evident, then, that there is no secrecy or concealment with regard to the cures at the Medical Bureau. On the contrary, there is a considerable measure of publicity. However, whilst in the interests of truth the greatest publicity possible should be aimed at, yet it is indispensable, in the examination of the cases, to use much discretion, and even at times secrecy, as must be done in the course of ordinary medical examinations. For this reason, in 1920 I put in force an old regulation which had become obsolete, and this was that the room in which the medical examinations were carried out should be absolutely strictly reserved for doctors only, and

those witnesses or other persons concerned whom it was necessary to interrogate.

Little by little the custom had come in at Lourdes of penetrating into all the rooms of the Medical Bureau, even at the times of investigation and examination of the patients. It frequently happened in consequence that freshly arrived medical men were unable to gain entrance. Again, this invasion of the Bureau had a very awkward aspect, in view of the necessarily private character of some of the consultations.

An incident which occurred in 1913 very definitely comes to mind. I was leaning over a table making out the report, which my colleague Dr. Boissarie had asked me to do, when I suddenly received on my shoulders a lady of no small weight, who, unable to enter by the door, had with the aid of her husband got in through the window. I may add that she was almost immediately followed by a young seminarist, eager to view a "miraculé" at close quarters.

At the Lourdes clinic the examinations are not made superficially or hastily. The investigations at the Bureau, for the most part, take a considerable time, are laborious and difficult, for serious errors must be avoided above all things. It mostly happens that no doctor is on the spot just at the time of a cure. Very often the examiners of the case have not seen it before the cure. It is then necessary, by documents, examinations of absolutely reliable witnesses, and researches of all sorts, to be able to affirm with certitude the previous existence of the disease. It can be well understood that much labour and time

are needed to make the necessary investigations, to classify and verify documents and certificates, to call in the collaboration of witnesses whose evidence shall be above suspicion.

The official report first being made, then follows the patient's account, and after that the certificates; these are often incomplete, and cannot furnish the necessary guarantees without further study and enquiry. This necessitates demanding further particulars from the doctors who have had charge of the patient before the pilgrimage, and perhaps also from those who have received them cured on their return home.

Some cases are requested to attend at the Bureau in the morning and afternoon for several days. Each time they are put into the hands of different examiners, who draw out fresh reports. If there is still doubt or a chance of error, the enquiries are pursued at home by means of doctors either in Paris or the provinces; by these means we get correspondents everywhere, and build up a regular network of information. In this manner elaborate and very complete reports are drawn up: certificates of arrival, report of the examination, interrogation of patient and witnesses, correspondence, etc. . . . Then the observations and notes of the doctor treating the case, letters, and all sorts of particulars of the case obtained later, have to be classified. The whole report constitutes quite a large work, which is based finally on undeniable evidence.

If a case does not appear to be clearly outside the normal, the examination is stopped, and it is dis-

cussed no further. Occasionally this causes violent attacks on the part of those who believed or pretended themselves cured, and are very unwilling to be excluded from the list of privileged persons.

As a matter of fact, the cure of all maladies which have a definite psychological or nervous origin are put on one side. We very rarely retain such cases, considering them only as simple ameliorations, even though they may have been very extraordinary.

Those cases only are permanently registered which are complete, have stood the test of time, and have been seriously and conscientiously studied in all their details.

IV

After patients have been seen by several medical men, and their "dossier" contains the opinions of three, five, or perhaps ten conscientious practitioners or specialists; when again these cures are controlled by other doctors, of differing schools of thought, nationality, and religion; when the conclusion is pronounced only after all objections have been heard, and all have been able to express an opinion—then I hold that this method of examination constitutes an enquiry which it would be difficult to make more complete and thorough.

As a result of the work of the Bureau and the publication of its findings, the representatives of Science have been compelled to put their silence and disdain on one side. They have been obliged to follow the irresistible current which has now for some years drawn the medical world to acknowledge the teachings of Lourdes.

The great religious movement, of which the little Pyrenean city is the centre, has been accompanied by an interest which is constantly growing amongst the medical men of the whole world. Each year we register an increasing number of colleagues who present themselves at the Bureau, which Professor Duret called "the greatest, the most interesting, the most extraordinary clinic in the world."[1]

In 1905 three hundred and forty-six doctors loyally signed a public declaration to the effect that "great numbers of cases considered hopeless have been cured at Lourdes by some action of which Science is ignorant, and which cannot be rationally explained by the laws of Nature."

We are, then, authorised to say without fear of contradiction that the cures which occur at our sanctuaries are well worth study, and that they can be submitted to scientific criticism.

Science rarely disputes the facts, she discusses only their interpretation. This interpretation cannot but be beneficial when it allows itself to be guided, not by prejudice and preconceived opinion, but by careful examination and honest discussion in conjunction with other colleagues of well-known probity and competence. These conditions, we do not hesitate to say, are found at Lourdes, and of the work there Bernheim himself said: "The facts exist. All the observations have been made by conscientious men."

Our archives contain the reports of all those cases of supernatural cure which have been published, together with all the different phases of the enquiry,

[1] Boissarie, *L'Œuvre de Lourdes*, p. 35.

and all the various medical certificates which have served as a base for this search into the supernatural. The publication of these archives has now reached all parts of the world, and for the last sixty years many indifferent and sceptical scientific men have been convinced by the evidence and rendered homage to the truth. A large number of doctors at the present day, of diverse creeds, also interest themselves in this problem of the supernatural, and those who come to study the subject on the spot carry to all parts of the world the assurance of our good faith and sincerity.

Boissarie recounts that Dr. Bertillon loyally recognised that "all is done in absolute good faith; there is no staging of effects at the Bureau, no manipulation of the facts."[1]

Moreover, experience has for a long time demonstrated that the Bureau at Lourdes shows always a great reserve. This is because it wishes to arrive at a demonstration of the facts which shall be free from all suspicion and adverse criticism, and it is precisely because of this that the cures published by the Bureau are accepted as definite scientific proofs, and are not treated as negligible and of no account.

The findings of the Bureau are discussed, and it is endeavoured to show that the facts put forward must accord with the laws of Science. The attempt to explain the cures by hysteria, suggestion, or unknown laws cannot succeed.

Those who have watched the manner in which affairs are carried out at the Bureau, have seen the

[1] Boissarie, *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, tome 37, p. 221.

scrupulous care and the length of time taken over our decisions, who know also all the reservations we make before definitely concluding as to the nature of the malady and the circumstances of the cure, cannot reasonably continue to support the theory of nervous illnesses, of suggestion, etc.—theories so often put forward, and as frequently refuted; theories which once were very prevalent, and still hold sway amongst the ignorant and the prejudiced.

Those who have come to Lourdes and taken part in our work know that we preserve for registration and publication only a limited number amongst the more remarkable cures observed. The various cases recorded in our registers by no means represent the totality of the inexplicable cases which occur at the rocks of Massabielle.

Not infrequently, after the return of the pilgrims to their dioceses, the director of the pilgrimage publishes a list of numerous ameliorations, and sometimes of definite cures.

Boissarie reports[1] that in 1908, although no case belonging to the Lyons Pilgrimage had been cured according to the Bureau, yet the official bulletin gave a list of no less than *fifty-two*. It may certainly be affirmed that a certain number of these fifty-two cases were worthy of being retained in our reports, and it does sometimes happen that they are rectified by communications from the diocesan directors. But it is none the less certain that the majority of these cases cited after the return could offer no such degree of scientific proof as to warrant their obtaining

[1] *Les Guerisons*, p. 12.

a place in our archives. However that may be, it is certain that there are quite a number of cases cured at the Grotto which absolutely escape us.

Amongst this number are found many isolated cases, patients who have not come with the pilgrimages but privately, have not stayed in hospital but rested at some of the hotels, and have not wished to come to the Bureau, from fear of attracting curiosity and of drawing upon themselves the attention of the crowds.

Again, there are cases which have come to Lourdes and during their stay there have not experienced the slightest change for the better, but are perhaps cured in the train during the return journey or a few days after in their own homes, and such cases as these do not come to our knowledge.

It happens, therefore, that each year a number of cures are reported which have not been officially registered at the Bureau. But even allowing for a certain amount of exaggeration in the local statistics, it cannot be denied that the number of cases published in our annals is far below the actual number of cures obtained, simply because the field of observation is too vast for us to take in and chronicle the complete totality of events.

Whatever may be the number of sick cured by our Lady of Lourdes, it is certain that the cures are definite facts. They cannot be denied; it is absurd to contradict what the most sceptical can come and observe for themselves, cases established and confirmed by such reliable evidence. Doctors who have come to the Bureau, and studied for themselves our

methods, know that the cures of Lourdes are verities which cannot be denied.

V

Perfection is not of this world. I willingly recognise that even with the advantages of modern science, which we at present use or propose to use in the future at our clinic, we shall never altogether escape criticism; there will always remain some joints in our armour. Still, it does not follow that all the reproaches addressed to the Bureau are by any means merited.

Certain unbelievers who do not trust the Bureau and the method in which we conduct our examinations, state that to be convinced they would require that on a certain definite date a miracle should be granted, which should be examined by a number of men of science who were all convinced sceptics. This seems to me a somewhat singular proposition. They wish, as a matter of fact, to cite Providence before a definite tribunal, and then examine its acts. When a patient is cured at Lourdes outside natural laws by the goodness of the Creator, the Medical Bureau studies the circumstances in which the divine influence manifested itself, and examines the facts to the best of its ability.

It has, however, never yet had the idea of citing the Omnipotent of Heaven before its tribunal at a definite date. The Bureau awaits the time and means which the Sovereign Master may use to manifest his intervention. We can never choose the moment for a cure any more than the patients whose prayers will be

heard. During certain weeks it may happen that we have not a single case to register; and then again, on some day quite a number present themselves at the Bureau, waiting to have their return to health medically certified.

We are frequently reproached at the Medical Bureau for publishing too quickly, for "making known cures which need more examination and research before being definitely confirmed." Our worthy predecessor long ago replied to this accusation: "These premature publications, at times rendered necessary by the impatient curiosity of the pilgrims, who would look elsewhere for less reliable accounts, have besides their inconveniences certain advantages. They induce free discussion about all the facts, discussions in which the most diverse opinions are brought forward, at a time when the facts are still fresh in the mind and everybody knows about them. A work which demands the light of day and rests upon definite evidence cannot be completed in the silence of the study." I acknowledge that sometimes some cases published too hastily by the journals must be rejected; the same occasionally happens with regard to reports in our registers, which after further enquiry have to be cancelled. When this occurs, however, the facts are invariably conscientiously noticed in our archives, and brought to the notice of the public by means of our official organ, the *Journal of the Grotto*.

Others have accused the Bureau of not being sufficiently scrupulous and scientific in its examinations. Thus Dr. Le Fur of Paris, in a communication that

he read before the Society of St Luke in 1901, summed up "the desiderata demanded by those who were of a definitely scientific spirit."

These desiderata, according to our eminent colleague, were as follows:

(1) "A severe winnowing should be made, and only those cases absolutely inexplicable retained, such as any person in good faith must acknowledge."

But I have already stated that this is the chief preoccupation of the Bureau. I brought forward as proof of this the struggle we are obliged to wage against the enthusiasm of the crowd and the haste of the Press. I also instanced the rectifications which we publish each year with regard to accounts of cures prematurely given to the public.

A notice is prominently displayed in the hall of the Bureau calling the attention of our colleagues to the absolute necessity of successive and long examinations, as these alone can give sufficient guarantee to reports published at the earliest opportunity.

In September, 1920, in a communication inserted in the *Journal of the Grotto*, I called attention to the grave consequences which can ensue from the publication by unauthorised journals of fantastic reports and pretended cures which are sent to them, and I insisted on the support that such recitals furnished to the enemies of the supernatural.

(2) "Each patient arriving at Lourdes must be furnished with a satisfactory medical certificate."

Alas! It does not suffice either to write or say "the organisers of pilgrimages *must* demand from the doctors very detailed certificates." The patients

brought to Lourdes by the Association of "Notre Dame du Salut," or those brought by the more important pilgrimages, usually possess a definite report, and the certificate from a doctor who has attended them and seen them shortly before their departure for Lourdes. We have ourselves drawn up a definite formula which we should like to see uniformly adopted by all. But, as I shall relate in the next chapter, it is very often difficult to obtain detailed and exact descriptions of the illness. Even if the forms made and approved are adopted for the medical observations, how many medical men there are who have either not the time or the inclination to do this, and who will continue to give certificates written in haste and carelessly worded.

Again, how obtain definite certificates in the case of isolated pilgrims who belong to no definitely organised party?

In such cases when, as so often happens, there is this unfortunate gap which it is difficult to fill up, the fault must not be attributed to the Medical Bureau. Careful and accurate certificates are good. An enquiry conducted with abundant witnesses and all scientific precautions is better still.

(3) "In certain cases, a photograph or radiograph should be attached to the notes. In the case of consumption the examination for the bacilli is indispensable."

It is seldom now that patients suffering from osseous, articular, visceral, or pulmonary lesions do not bring a radiograph with them to the Bureau. Again, the result of the examination for tubercle

bacilli is usually stated in the case of the tuberculous. I have installed at the Bureau a microscope and a small room for eye examinations, and a colleague at Lourdes has placed at our disposal his laboratory for radiology. But it is indispensable to bear in mind that those who come to demand their cure of our Lady of Lourdes cannot be compared to those patients who visit some definite health resort: in the one case the main preoccupation is the scrupulous observance of all the details of the treatment, and an absolute submission to all the advice; whilst in the other the medical point of view is reduced to the minimum in the eyes of those who place their confidence in the powerful intervention of our blessed Lady.

Those who demand so urgently, and with so much noise, that the Bureau at Lourdes should take the first place in this city of the miraculous, totally ignore the mentality of the pilgrims. Before the Bureau, and leaving it absolutely in the shade, is the Grotto, the various religious exercises, the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, the Basilica, *and the blessed Virgin herself.*

It must be carefully borne in mind that for the sick at Lourdes the religious aspect is all, the medical side practically negligible. When this is recognised it will be seen how absolutely chimerical are various suggestions that have been put forward to render the prodigies that happen at Lourdes more complete and certain.

For instance:

"The individual witness of medical men is insuffi-

cient. Let there be appointed a definite commission charged with the control of the certificates and the drawing up of the reports."

"A radiograph must be made in all those cases in which it is essential for diagnosis, or for the result of treatment. A photograph should be taken before and after the cure in every case."

"There must be a microscopic examination of all tumours. It is indispensable that the same doctor examines the patient on arrival, and again after the cure."

"In each piscine there should be a doctor, so that he may be present at the cure, and notice the various phases of the return to health."

Anyone who makes such demands as these can have very little idea of the actual condition of things at Lourdes.

If all these researches can be used in some clinic, where patients come voluntarily to trust themselves in the hands of specialists; or if at hospital one can be somewhat exigent towards patients who in return for treatment contribute towards clinical research and the training of the students, the case is quite different at Lourdes.

I have mentioned how short the stay usually is of these unfortunates who have been abandoned by Science, and come here hoping only in the intercession of our blessed Lady. Practically the whole of their time is consecrated to acts of faith, piety, and prayer: the sick remain only for the hours of meals and during the night in the halls of the hospital, establishments which have only the name of hospitals.

Early each morning they are conducted or escorted to the Grotto, where they assist at Mass. After this the ladies attached to the service of the sick serve them a meal under the shade of the trees, which are close to the Sanctuary. Then comes the waiting at the piscine, the bath, and more prayers at the Grotto. In the afternoon there are numerous other exercises before the Grotto, at the piscines, and finally the big Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. How could one possibly insist on the pilgrims depriving themselves of some of these religious exercises to devote the time to being examined by some medical commission, to give themselves up to laboratory experiments or some special examination, which would appear of little utility to them?

Here is a poor patient with advanced cancer; the trouble is generalised. As soon as he descends from the train, would you break into the enthusiasm which has brought him to the feet of our Lady, and stay him at the door of the Bureau? Can you imagine imposing upon him the obligation of letting you have a specimen of his tumour for your microscope? The name you give to his disease matters little to him.

By what right can you impose upon patients that they shall come before a tribunal of unknown doctors and exhibit their diseases?

During the great pilgrimages at Lourdes, it is not rare to have as many as a thousand or twelve hundred sick. Where will you find sufficient doctors to examine singly these large numbers?

The doctors themselves, as a rule, only make a short sojourn in the Pyrenees. It would be materially

impossible for them to find the time to examine more than a very small proportion of these subjects. "One could make a choice," objects someone—"the most interesting cases could be studied." Yes, perhaps, if one knew in advance those cases which would be privileged. For most certainly those to whom a cure was promised would willingly submit themselves to an examination.

When a cure is produced, there is no longer any delay or hesitation. The happy privileged person is only too glad to come and receive at the Bureau the official confirmation of the favour which has been accorded to him, and to contribute his part to the glory of our Lady. But as God gives us no indications of those whom he will choose, and necessity obliges us to limit the number of our observations, it happens that the needed examination is often wanting in the case of those who are cured.

Again I repeat that it is comparatively seldom that the patients come voluntarily to the Bureau *before being cured*. "*I have not the time*. . . . If I am cured you will certainly see me." That is the response that is frequently made me, when I ask some interesting case to come to the Bureau before going to the piscine.

A large number of the pilgrims, too, are absolutely convinced that it is useless and superfluous to present themselves at the Bureau. The crowd, which can little understand our difficulties and delays, is only too disposed to approve and applaud such a declaration as, "This poor patient came to Lourdes to demand a cure of the holy Virgin. What business is

it of the doctors?" Others advise their friends not to go near the Bureau. "The Medical Bureau is a *cold douche establishment*, so hostile to the declaration of a miracle, that one may demand whether the doctors at the Bureau believe at all in the supernatural."

I must admit that I feel somewhat satisfied when remarks like this are reported to me; they are at any rate witness to the reserve we use, and are definite evidence of the caution manifested before admitting the extraordinary nature of some cure. They demonstrate, at the same time, however, that it is far from easy for us to get the cases we desire for examination.

Let us grant for a moment that it is possible during five months of the year to have a photographic operator at work: do people really imagine that all the cases we wish to be photographed will submit to that ordeal? Will some hunchback, some patient disfigured by lupus, allow this when there is no certitude of cure?

Again, Lourdes is not a hospital. The only patients we can interrogate are those who have no objection to our doing so.

Continuing in the same order of ideas, it is absolutely impossible to think of some doctor assisting at the piscine, at an immersion where the greater number wish to be incognito. There is not a woman who would undress in front of a doctor of whom she has not the slightest knowledge, and for whose advice she has not asked. When I sign the permission for some colleague who asks to see how things are

conducted at the piscines, the idea never entered my head that the card I sign shall give him the right of entry to the piscines reserved for the women.

What a terrible task it would be for the doctors who undertook this duty when on some days in each bath some hundreds are immersed!

But let us be serious. How is the bathing undertaken at Lourdes? The patient when undressed is wrapped by the member of the hospitality who is on duty at the piscine in a bath-gown. If the patient can walk she descends the cement steps of the bath, assisted on each side by one of the ladies working there, otherwise she is lowered by means of straps. She advances to the end of the bath, where she kisses the statue of the blessed Virgin. Then she plunges, or is plunged, in the icy water. After this she comes out, immediately giving place to someone else. During these different and rapid actions the prayers are uninterrupted. The patient during the whole time of the bath recites the act of contrition, whilst the lady infirmarians say the invocations.

Well, can you imagine the doctor on duty suddenly stopping these acts of piety and saying to the patient: "Please wait a moment. The prayers and invocations must cease. The moment has come for me to note the temperature. I must take the pulse and respiration rate, and also a record of the blood-pressure . . ."?

Consequently, what we have to do is to utilise as far as possible the means placed at our disposal. Let us not step outside the position assigned us. The rôle of the Medical Bureau is to control and put in

evidence, *as far as it possibly can under the circumstances*, the extra-natural processes of many of the cures.

The Bureau is not meant to diagnose disease, to teach, and to treat as is done at an ordinary hospital.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTORS

The rôle of the doctors since the apparitions—A medical movement in favour of Lourdes—Those who keep away—Human respect—*Madame Rouchel*—The doctors of Metz—The Academicians—The Faculties—Sectarianism—Medical certificates—The doctors who believe—Those who do not—The incredulous—The irreconcilables—The sceptics—Those who will not investigate—Good faith—*Mademoiselle Claire Paquignon*—The victory of evidence—The medical pilgrims.

I

THE medical profession has been called to pronounce on the marvellous facts of Lourdes, which occur so publicly, from the time of the appearance of the miraculous spring in the corner of the Grotto, indicated by our Lady to Bernadette, up to and including our own time.

At the commencement there was the question of Bernadette's mental state, of investigating and understanding her statements, of explaining the first cures that took place at the spring. Now at the present time there is still necessity to observe the ways by which the supernatural manifests itself, and here the medical profession has an important task.

Now, as in former days, the doctors are asked to give their opinion about facts which contradict all known laws, all the notions and deductions acquired as the result of rigorous observation.

Before Lourdes, before 1858, the doctors had to lay down their arms when all the resources of medical skill had been exhausted, and declare themselves powerless in the face of approaching death.

Since the apparitions on the banks of the Gave, people have come from all parts of the world suffering from maladies which human Science had pronounced incurable, and after prayer at the Grotto, or at the passage of our Lord in the blessed Sacrament, have suddenly recovered their health despite the adverse opinions of Science.

It is easy to understand that the first movement of the medical world, in view of these prodigies, was one of surprise, even of revolt against facts which so unexpectedly reversed notions acquired during their professional education.

It is not altogether easy for a man of science to recognise that a power exists capable of doing that which medicine and surgery cannot do. Consequently, it is easy to understand how Lourdes had declared and irreconcilable enemies amongst the medical profession. It is natural for men exclusively habituated to the observation of facts not to accept without careful control other facts which totally reverse scientific opinion, and to be at first dumbfounded before such a problem.

To all we use the same language: "We publish observations of extraordinary cures. If you believe that our interpretation of these cures is an erroneous one, then respond to our demand: Come to the Medical Bureau at Lourdes. If there we can show you some blind person who has suddenly recovered

sight, some ulcer which has cicatrised suddenly, or some other well-known organic malady which has disappeared in a few instants, and you can state yourself the reality of the fact, in conformity with the most rigorous laws of evidence and by careful clinical examination, then we ask you simply to acknowledge the reality of the facts; after that you can search for some explanation which shall satisfy you."

The only true means to solve this problem is to study the facts. The question cannot be solved by a sarcastic smile, a shrug of the shoulders, or some frivolous witticism. At one time it was the fashion with Diday, Charcot, and a number of others to mock and laugh as often as Lourdes was mentioned. It was sought to escape an embarrassing question by silence or contempt; or if this was not the case, the difficulty was solved at a distance without examination, by means of some hypothesis which had no basis in fact. Another method was to try and swamp the evidence, as it were, by a flood of abuse. It is impossible to forget the terrible blasphemies uttered against our Lady of Lourdes by the German scientific world at the beginning of the war.

However, the cures at Lourdes are so striking, so contrary to the laws of Nature, that for some years now it has been impossible to treat them as purely negligible. The moment has arrived when doctors will not content themselves with prejudiced discussions and insufficient arguments. They have understood, in the first place, that definitely to refute the facts much study is needed, that these phenomena necessitate being observed on the spot, and as far as

possible at the time of their production, before they can state that they are truths or errors.

This is why the number of medical men who refuse to follow blindly ready-made opinions, who wish to see and examine for themselves, increases year by year, and explains the considerable and incontestable movement of the medical world in favour of Lourdes.

Since 1892—that is, during the last thirty years—seven thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight doctors have passed through the Medical Bureau. I subjoin the number of colleagues who have been inscribed in the register of the Bureau for each year.

	Doctors.
1892	120
1893	119
1894	160
1895	177
1896	203
1897	112
1898	200
1899	240
1900	216
1901	328
1902	268
1903	228
1904	245
1905	274
1906	280
Carried forward	3,170

	Doctors.
Brought forward	3,170
1907	332
1908	624
1909	446
1910	478
1911	536
1912	568
1913	670
1914	227
1915	6
1916	10
1917	5
1918	18
1919	99
1920	239
1921	400
Total	7,828

As can be seen, the numbers reached their highest total in 1913, when they amounted to six hundred and seventy. This movement was arrested during the World War, as the majority of the doctors were mobilised.

However, since that time both doctors and pilgrims, despite the difficulties of the journey, have recommenced the visits to our sanctuaries. Although a large number were retained by the necessity of building up their practices again, yet in 1921 we received as many as four hundred. Of this number foreigners constituted about one-third, and we can count professors, surgeons, doctors of hospital staffs, etc., coming from all nationalities.

All without exception have expressed themselves as extremely pleased with the fraternal courtesy which exists at our meetings. All have felicitated us on the careful and scrupulous manner in which our enquiries are conducted. All have declared themselves so interested, that they have promised to return during the following years.

II

Though the number of our collaborators increases, recruited as it is from the regular visitors to the Bureau, from those passing through Lourdes, and those drawn by the attraction of the unknown, yet still unfortunately too many keep away. The latter, afraid of being enlightened, or perhaps dazzled by too bright a light, still prefer to keep company with unbelief and free thought. "What need is there to go and see? In the centuries of ignorance and superstition one might indulge in such pleasantries. But to-day such things do not merit attention. Is not Science capable of unmasking these impostures? What occurs at Lourdes, does it not also occur at the Salpétrière? Only there the same facts take place without noise and advertisement! And then, we

cannot be certain of the miraculous, since it is a derogation of the laws of Nature, and we cannot know all her laws."

One would never believe the specious arguments that preconceived ideas and prejudice can furnish to men of science to support their incredulity, and prevent them from occupying themselves with the question of Lourdes.

For these savants, since the supernatural obtains results contrary to admitted laws, and *a priori* one cannot admit any such derogation of law, every supernatural fact which is opposed to pathological and physiological laws is impossible.

In their studies doctors for the most part pursue a rigorous method of observation: they remain within the limits indicated by the analysis of facts, scrutinise these facts, register most carefully and patiently the results of these observations, and from these draw definite conclusions and derive accurate teaching.

But as soon as it is a question of Lourdes, for the doctors I am now considering, there is no study of the facts, no experimental observation. Silence and abstention seem to them sufficient. When some miraculous account comes from the banks of the Gave, they obstinately shut their eyes and turn their heads away. They will not even consent to take notice of the accounts presented to them. Again they repeat, the supposed facts about which there is discussion are absurd, therefore they are impossible.

The mere mention of Lourdes obscures the eyes and intellects of some doctors, so that they appear to be attacked with a species of phobia. Human respect is

really the main reason which prevents them studying the question; this hypnotises them and makes them keep silence, for they consider the miraculous as an unwarranted intrusion of the Primal Cause into the domain of Science, of which they believe themselves to be the infallible interpreters. When it is not from fear of having to change their mode of life, it is usually human respect which causes doctors to eliminate *a priori* divine intervention in such matters: they purposely avoid study and research in a territory which they consider somewhat dangerous. With an exaggerated deference for the opinions of others, they remain in the shade and keep silence. If they were led by chance where they would discover the truth, they would be afraid of being laughed at; consequently they prefer to say nothing one way or another.

On September 4, 1903, Madame Rouchel, a resident of Metz, arrived at Lourdes on pilgrimage. This unfortunate woman had suffered for the previous nine years from a terrible lupus of the face. The nose, the upper lip, the right cheek were attacked, and the discharge was abundant and fœtid. In addition there were two perforations which permitted the passage of the tip of the little finger—one in the right cheek, the other in the palate; these allowed food both to escape externally and into the nose. All these chronic and well-authenticated lesions were *instantaneously* cured one afternoon in the Church of the Rosary; the loss of substance which I have just described was *suddenly* made good.

This important case naturally attracted the attention of the doctors of Metz, who held several meetings

to discuss the matter without taking account of the opinion of Dr. Ernst, who had attended and treated the case, nor of other certain evidence, they maintained that because a very small amount of ulceration still remained on the internal aspect of the upper lip the cure did not exist, and that the simple amelioration observed could be perfectly explained by a natural process. These doctors of Metz did not say a word about the instantaneous cicatrisation of the perforations in the cheek and palate, and they attributed the cause of the skin lesion to syphilis. The cure, they said, was obtained by an active anti-syphilitic treatment.

A very lively discussion followed this curious judgement, and Dr. Boissarie discussed the affair with his Lorraine colleagues. It was then agreed to refer the matter to experts. The President of the Bureau wished to submit the question to Dr. Besnier, former President of the Academy of Medicine, and to Professor Fournier, who was on the staff of the Hospital of St Louis.

Well, the result was that both these two experts refused to have anything to do with the question.

On June 9, 1905, Dr. Besnier replied in the following terms to Dr. Boissarie's report: "My dear colleague—I have decided to decline the position of expert, and to let it rest at that. I do not find in an extemporised and purely clinical examination sufficient ground on which to base a definite judgement."

Dr. Boissarie, in a letter to a medical friend, gave the following account of his visit to Professor Fournier: "I remained an hour with the Professor.

I definitely explained to him the reasons why I demanded his opinion, but I was unable to persuade him to either give a definite decision or to take notice of the evidence. The Professor was inclined to the diagnosis of syphilis, but he made restrictions as to the perforation of the cheek, a rare occurrence with specific trouble. As to the mode of the cure and its rapidity, he declined any pronouncement. 'For you,' he said, 'that would be a miracle. But that is not a question for me; I do not wish to enter into that domain.' He remained mute as the Sphinx, fearing above all to commit himself in any way. At the end of the interview he said to me: 'I do not wish to pronounce either for the doctors of Metz, or for you.' ''

I may say that very fortunately Drs. Tennesson and du Castel, members of the Academy of Medicine, had no such fears, and did not refuse an opinion asked of them in the interests of truth. Both these distinguished men declared that the affection was certainly not syphilitic.

During the summer of 19— an exceedingly well-known scientific man was at Lourdes. The wife of this savant, in gratitude to the Immaculate Virgin for the protection of her son during the war, had obtained from her husband the promise to stay for a couple of days at Lourdes on their return from an excursion in the Pyrenees. He was present at the moving spectacle of the crowds in prayer, of the ardent supplications of the sick and infirm, but simply as an indifferent spectator. At the end of the first day he said he had had enough of these manifestations, and that it was time to go. However, at the urgent

request of his wife, who reminded him of his promise, he replied: "Ah, well, I will wait the other day that I promised. During this last day I will go to the Medical Bureau; I shall not be sorry to see a little of what passes there."

This proposal of his was brought to me by a friend who knew the incredulous scientist, and I prepared to receive him cordially.

I saw him on the afternoon of that day striding several times up and down the avenue of chestnuts which shade the front of the Bureau, but he did not cross the threshold.

May we not suppose that human respect and fear of the truth annihilated the will and reasoning powers of the men of whom I have spoken? This fear of compromising themselves by merely pronouncing the name of Lourdes is only too real.

Some few years ago, in a provincial Faculty, a candidate for the doctorate presented as his thesis a work entitled *The Cures of Lourdes*. The four members of the jury congratulated him on the importance of the work, which in their eyes was considerably above the level of the ordinary theses, but in the course of the discussion they objected that the work had "an emotional and supernatural side, with which the Faculty had nothing to do." Despite the brilliant refutation by the candidate of all the objections brought forward, the jury declared that the thesis did not show sufficient scientific characters, and it was *unanimously* refused by all the members, *including the President*, who three weeks before had signed permission for the thesis to be printed!

This surprising decision caused, a short time after, an official protest before the Dean of the Faculty on the part of the Students' Association.

Our Universities consider the facts of Lourdes unworthy of all discussion and examination. They much prefer to shut themselves up in silence and supreme indifference, rather than run the risk of having to acknowledge that there are facts which the laws of pathology and physiology are quite unable to explain.

In this connection I may cite another example of official ostracism, shown with regard to the facts of Lourdes by some of our University authorities. In this case, however, the event was followed by quite unforeseen consequences.

About the end of 1900 the young Dr. Alexis Carel, who was a prosector in the Faculty of Medicine at Lyons, became very interested in Dr. Boissarie's book *The Cures of Lourdes*. He acknowledged his surprise on reading of the instantaneous union of an ununited fracture, of the sudden disappearance of a cancer of the tongue, of the immediate cicatrisation of an ulcer 30 centimetres in length. These facts were the more interesting because they permitted those who were searching for the truth to make a series of important deductions and conclusions.

He resolved then to study on the spot analogous phenomena which experience and known laws consider as impossible.

To do this he accompanied as doctor the pilgrimage of 1902 from Lyons. Very interested in the case of a young girl from Lyons who for three years had been

under treatment in the hospitals, he kept her carefully in view during the journey. At Lourdes, at the Hospital, Grotto, and Bureau, he was a witness of the cure of this patient, and he noted hour by hour, minute by minute, the changes that occurred under his eyes. It is, as it were, a *resurrection* he describes scientifically, "eliminating all explanation from his thought and pen."

The case is that of the instantaneous cure of Marie Bailly reported by Dr. Boissarie.[1] She suffered from tuberculosis of the lungs and peritoneum.

Our archives preserve the most detailed and precise notes made by the young Lyons doctor from day to day between May 26 and June 4, 1902. There are also notes inscribed after the cure, at the return to Lyons, from June 7 to August 8. At the latter date the "miraculée" quitted the Hospital, and was accepted as a novice by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. "In view of the symptoms observed, the personal and family history, the diagnosis of such a well-known surgeon as Dr. Gouilloud, I also made the diagnosis of tuberculous peritonitis. As a matter of fact, no other hypothesis was possible."

"At the end of July the patient was entirely cured. Her weight increases a kilogramme a week. General health perfect."

Such are the notes beginning and closing this report, in which Dr. Carel noted all the symptoms and phenomena as a witness.

His observations are made in the most scrupulously scientific fashion; he makes no remarks, deduces no

[1] *Les Guérisons de Lourdes*, 2 partie, p. 58.

conclusion, but it is easy to see by the report that the event which he witnessed made a most deep impression.

This case was certainly the beginning of the change in his life which led to his becoming the future Director of the Rockefeller Medical Institute. Had it not been for Lourdes, Dr. Carel would not in all probability have undertaken the remarkable work which has made him known all over the world, and of which Dr. Philippon gives an account in No. 36 of the review *Science and Life*, January, 1918.

Here is the account which Dr. Philippon puts into the mouth of the celebrated surgeon P——, of Clermont-Ferrand:

Some twenty years ago, a young girl of twelve or thirteen years of age was brought to Dr. Carel, suffering from a chronic abscess in the right iliac fossa, and up to this time no treatment had been of any avail. Carel in his turn essayed all the resources of medicine and surgery, but without any satisfactory result. In despair he advised taking the child to Lourdes, and this advice was immediately followed.

A little time after, during a dinner at which were present the principal members of the Medical Faculty, one of the guests sitting near Carel asked him what had become of his little patient. "I have sent her to Lourdes," replied Carel, smiling. His reply was greeted with a general laugh. "You believe in that sort of treatment?" someone asked. "Really," replied Carel, "it was necessary to do something! But what is curious is that no later than this morning I have seen this child returned from Lourdes, and what will seem to you most extra-

ordinary is that she is cured." "What is that you are saying?" "Yes, she is cured, definitely and completely cured! Lourdes has succeeded in three or four days where we all failed; there is something which approaches the category of the miraculous." This last word caused a chilling silence, and Carel replied: "Please note carefully that I neither explain nor discuss. I content myself with stating the facts." Professor C—— then said: "It is useless to insist, sir, that with views such as those you can never be received as a member of our Faculty." "In that case," replied Carel, "I must go elsewhere. I believe that there are places where I shall be more cordially received."

He did as he had said, left Lyons and went to America, where it was not long before he became famous.

Such was the chance incident which put Carel on the road to success and celebrity.

To keep Lourdes as much in the shade as possible, blind sectarianism and irreconcilable hatred do the most strange and unjust acts.

About the end of August, 1921, *Le Petit Marseillais*, although it is not in the habit of so doing, published the following lines taken from its contemporary, *Le Soleil du Midi:*

"A Marseilles Doctor Testifies to a Cure at Lourdes

"Our contemporary, *Le Soleil du Midi*, published the following, which we reproduce:

"'One of our most popular Marseilles medical

men, Dr. Gabriel Coulange, has written to us that he was called to examine a miraculous cure at Lourdes.

"'The case concerned was one well known to our readers, that of Mademoiselle Emilie Cailleux, who, we are glad to say, is now in the most satisfactory condition.' The journal continued:

"'This person, said the doctor, was suddenly cured of Pott's disease on August 19th last, about three o'clock in the afternoon, whilst praying before the Grotto. At the Medical Bureau she was examined for three-quarters of an hour by Drs. Pineau, Goret, Gony, and Coulange, was found to have no trace of disease, and was declared instantaneously and completely cured.'

"This publication of *Le Petit Marseillais* did not please Dr. Monteux, the President of the Association of Marseilles Doctors, and at a meeting of their Council which took place on September 15, 1921, he brought the article in question to the notice of the members. This is how the official organ of the Marseilles Doctors' Association referred to the matter:

"'Dr. Monteux spoke of the article in *Le Petit Marseillais* referring to Dr. Coulange, and after some discussion said that he noticed with regret that a doctor had allowed an anti-scientific article to be inserted in the daily Press. Certain members of the Association supported the President.'

"This act caused a disagreeable surprise to the majority of the Marseilles medical men. The action of Dr. Monteux was certainly an abuse of his position, for a professional association does not concern

itself with the politics, philosophy, or religious beliefs of its members. But, above all, it was unjust and absurd. An anti-scientific article! Truly anti-clerical hatred is both blind and despotic. Is it not precisely in the name of Science that so many unbelieving doctors have tried to explain the Lourdes cures? Then why refuse the same right to Catholics in the name of Science? In any case, to grant it to one and refuse it to another is pure sectarianism.

"What increases the unfairness of Dr. Monteux's attack, is that Dr. Coulange had not attempted to give an explanation of the instantaneous cure of Mademoiselle Cailleux; he had contented himself with a record of what he had seen and examined. It is a *fact* that he recounts, an event that took place on such a day, at such an hour, at a definite spot, a fact which he himself had witnessed.

"Is it anti-scientific to witness to a definite fact?

"The evidence of Dr. Coulange has the more force in that it was corroborated by three other doctors, who examined the patient for three-quarters of an hour, and could find no trace of the malady. Is this minute and prolonged examination by four scientific men anti-scientific?

"Undoubtedly the action of the President of the Marseilles doctors was unjust and an abuse of his position.

"See what sectarianism leads to. But sometimes it receives the reward that it merits, and this is what happened at Marseilles. It would seem that the intolerance of Dr. Monteux was not altogether to the taste of the Marseilles medical profession, for their

Association had recently to re-elect its officers, and Dr. Monteux, the outgoing President, received only 45 votes out of 280, the remaining votes going to his successor. It was an act of justice; perhaps the irreconcilables will learn that enmity to the supernatural and to Lourdes does not always bring good fortune."[1]

The cure of Mademoiselle Emilie Cailleux was one of special importance in that the diagnosis in her case had been made by Professor Lecène, of Paris, under whose treatment the young girl had rested for two years, and it was the same professor who had signed her certificate when she set out for Lourdes.

The doctors of Marseilles, in giving such a strong majority against the re-election of Dr. Monteux, implicitly testified that the events of Lourdes are not so devoid of a scientific character as the adversaries of the supernatural would fain believe, but are indeed worthy of the attention of the world of science.

III

Having discussed the question of the systematic abstention of certain doctors from taking any notice of the cures at Lourdes, it will now be appropriate to consider the question of the *medical certificates*.

This question of the certificates is one of the most difficult that we have to deal with at the Bureau. When a cure occurs, and the "miraculé" is brought to the Bureau, immediately there is anxiety to see the patient's report, with the desire naturally of finding there all the necessary indications as to the malady

[1] *La Croix de Paris.*

and the patient's state before the cure. The hope is that by means of good certificates and reports it will be easy to pronounce as to the certitude of the cure. Alas! how many times we are disappointed, finding the certificates of practically no value at all.

I do not, of course, mean to say that the majority of medical men are afraid to put their signature to anything which can serve as the basis for establishing a supernatural fact; fortunately, there are a large number, *a very large number*, of colleagues who are convinced of the importance of their rôle, who think of the possible use that may be made of their signature, have no hesitation in stating the full technical details, and relate the whole pathological history of the patient they have attended and studied. These give a definite and precise diagnosis; in a word, they recognise their responsibility, and do not recoil from it. But it is difficult to form an idea of the number of doctors who, as a colleague said to me the other day, are seized with "agraphia," loss of ability to write, when it is a question of Lourdes. This incapacity is a well-known malady, which consists in lack of power to express thought in writing. There are a number of men who are unable to use pencil, pen, or stylograph when they are asked for a certificate in view of a pilgrimage. "What an idea that doctors should be mixed up in such affairs! What would my colleagues say if they saw that Dr. So-and-so had put his name to a certificate of that sort? To pass for a clerical or an idiot—never!" These are some of the fears that obsess doctors when they refuse to make any declaration, to give any

details about their patients. Sometimes to obtain from the doctor the necessary certificate, without which admission to a pilgrimage is refused, all sorts of ruses have to be employed and the strangest motives alleged.

Here is a letter which I possess, addressed to his parents by a young man who sought to obtain a certificate for his sister from a Parisian doctor: "I went to Dr. Z——; I told a deliberate lie to get the certificate, but he absolutely refused to say what was my sister's illness. He pretended that it would be a breach of professional confidence to write the name of the disease. Not being able to obtain it, I told him the motive for the certificate, but without any better success."

This refusal on the part of prejudiced or sceptical doctors, according to my way of thinking, shows the fear they have of contributing their quota to the documents of the Medical Bureau, which they know, in spite of everything, have definite scientific value. They dread bringing the supernatural to the light of day, thinking uneasily of the opinions of their patients and colleagues. For their signature placed on such a document might perhaps be fraught with serious consequences with regard to their colleagues and their practice.

When the circumstances are such that a certificate cannot be refused, and they are, as it were, constrained by force to give evidence, then they essay to be very diplomatic; their aim then is to say as little as possible in order not to compromise themselves. How hard it is for some people to be frank and open!

They purposely choose vague, inaccurate, confused terms, which are no assistance to those who examine the case, but leave a way of escape for themselves.

Instead of giving even laconically the details, diagnosis, description of symptoms, main morbid changes, treatment followed, and the prognosis, too many hide themselves behind a complicated phraseology, and voluntarily give incomplete certificates. Our archives contain many examples where the certificates seem to have been given by men absolutely terrified of entering upon this compromising and dangerous territory.

A doctor of the Midi definitely said to me that he had given a certificate for Lourdes which he had purposely made short and vague, for, he said, "it is exceedingly annoying, if there is a miracle, to see your colleagues pulling your diagnosis to pieces."

By the side of these timorous people we find the cynics. Some years ago at the annual séance held at the Bon Théâtre on the Quai de Passy, the example was given of a doctor who was the mayor of his commune, and a Freemason of high rank. Being asked to give a certificate for one of his patients going to Lourdes, he wrote as follows: "I, the undersigned, X——, Doctor in Medicine, certify that Madame Z—— is suffering from a malady, the nature and gravity of which my political and philosophical opinions hinder me from determining."

Another example: I received last summer (1922) a visit from a patient who brought the following certificate from his doctor: "I, the undersigned, . . . certify that Monsieur Y—— is ill."

It is easy to understand that it is impossible to do anything with a cure which brings statements of this kind; but there are others which, while not being so absurdly negative, whether voluntarily or not, absolutely lack all accuracy and precision.

I have under my eyes a certain number of these certificates, of which I give some specimens:

"I have had under my care Madame X——, who for two years has been suffering from an obstinate cough."

"Mademoiselle Z—— presents on examination a deformity of the left foot."

"The young A—— is constantly ill, and two operations have not cured him."

"I certify that I have had under my care for several years Madame B—— for a chronic affection, which I think might be spontaneously cured."

In this fashion one does not say too much, and in case of a cure at Lourdes there is ample room to escape. One does not incur the danger of being forced on the return of the patient to recognise the disappearance of a malady when no information had been given about it. By this method one does not run the risk of such a misadventure as happened to a doctor of whom Dr. Boissarie speaks. He had declared his patient to be consumptive. Moreover, he had confirmed this diagnosis by telegram. She was completely cured at Lourdes. On her return she obtained a certificate from this doctor attesting that she had been cured, but of a simple cold.

It is very embarrassing to have to go back on one's statement. But this does not trouble some practi-

tioners, who, rather than acknowledge the truth, make a cowardly retreat, and sign statements which they know are erroneous.

If we encounter these difficulties from some doctors when the patient sets out for Lourdes, the difficulty is even greater when they have returned cured, and desire a certificate to that effect. Some few years ago a Doctor in Medicine, by a certificate dated in the month of July, 19—, declared that a child who was a patient of his, and whom he had treated for a long time, had Pott's disease of the dorso-lumbar spine, and also an abscess which discharged in the groin. He described all the classical symptoms of the disease, and left no doubt as to its nature and gravity.

The child was taken to Lourdes, where he was suddenly cured of the spinal disease, and at the same time the abscess ceased to discharge. On his return the doctor examined his little patient, and in the August following, being asked to give a certificate, wrote as follows: "The orifice of the abscess is completely cicatrised, all the movements of the spine are re-established, and can be performed without difficulty or pain, and the child is actually now in a very satisfactory condition." But he then went on to add: "This favourable result may occur normally in a case of Pott's disease. Moreover, I wish to state that I gave the previous certificate on the demand of the family, who stated that it was a necessity. I consider it of only slight importance, for I wrote it in haste, and in terms which might be wrongly interpreted."

Doctor P——, one of our most skilled and devoted

collaborators, arrived at Lourdes with a recent French National Pilgrimage, and was present at the cure of a young girl from the Diocese of M——. On his return to the chief town of the diocese, he visited the doctor who had attended the young "miraculée" and had given her the certificate. "You remember the patient you saw last month, Mary T——? Isn't it correct that she certainly had hip disease?" "*Typical hip disease.*" "Well, she is cured!" "What do you say—cured?" "Yes, she was cured in the piscine at Lourdes. I examined her on the morning of her arrival there, and the following day I happened to be in the Medical Bureau when the cure was certified." "Oh, that does not astonish me. I always considered her as a case that might very well be cured at Lourdes!"

When it was announced to another doctor that one of his patients who suffered from tuberculous joint disease had been cured, and his opinion was asked about the case, he wrote the following lines: "Madame X—— was placed in a plaster splint, and continuous extension applied, but with a view of suggestion, for I had always regarded her as an hysterical subject." To immobilise a woman in plaster, and apply extension during some months, to "suggestionise" her, is not this something of a discovery?

A doctor was charged to make a report as to the state of health of the unfortunate victim of an accident; after having minutely described the various lesions produced, he concluded that the diagnosis was certain, the prognosis very grave. On a second examination he stated that the patient would be an

invalid for the remainder of his life. Finally he stated that although it was impossible to assign a definite time for the survival of the injured person, yet he did not consider that this could be of long duration.

However, the invalid, taken to Lourdes *in extremis*, instantaneously recovered his health. On this occasion the doctor was much put about. Called to give evidence in the case of his patient, who had changed so suddenly and radically in spite of the gloomy prognosis, he was unable to deny the cure. But he declared that he had made an error; there were, however, extenuating circumstances: "I was, it is true, deceived. But I was not alone. All the doctors who saw the case were, like me, deceived. Everybody was deceived."

How was he deceived? He does not say, but he tries to explain. What happened? "This is what must have happened. Some of the symptoms *can be* considered as . . . doctors can be led into error." To sum up, all these restatements and hesitations have but one end in view, to lead to the following conclusion: "The cure of Mr. X—— has nothing supernatural about it. Some of the symptoms can be considered as hysterical manifestations. On the other hand, some symptoms might have been caused by classical lesions, but here other doctors as well as myself may have been mistaken. The patient was certainly a nervous subject, and his return to health was the result of a shock, the considerable effect produced upon him by the crowds and the general effect of Lourdes."

You must, however, be just. One day you state that the patient's condition is hopeless, that both Nature and science can do nothing for the grave lesions that are present, whose nature you describe. You let it be known that the fatal termination is not far off: then suddenly the following day, by a contradiction passing strange, because the cure goes contrary to your theories and preconceived views, you affirm without hesitation that this cure has nothing extraordinary about it.

Another type of doctor is he who, not wishing to admit the miraculous, is yet unwilling to go back on his word, to contradict to-day what he said yesterday. Many of these, however, for fear of being obliged to give a definite opinion, steal out of the way when occasion is presented to them for judging.

The subject of a cure, which had made considerable sensation, wrote to one of the doctors who had treated her, appointing a definite place and time for him to judge the change in her state of health. He kept her waiting some days for the reply, which stated: "I have learnt with real satisfaction the change for the better that has occurred in your condition. I shall be happy to think of you in a good state of health, instead of picturing the unfortunate individual who was under my care. . . . Very many thanks for your kind invitation. It would have given me great pleasure to congratulate you personally, but my work gives me no time for a break, consequently I shall be unable to see you. Believe me," etc.

I could multiply the examples I have given to a very considerable extent. Those who have read them

will see the difficulties we have to encounter at the Medical Bureau in order to obtain the necessary technical evidence. At the same time, however, besides these documents which leave very much to be desired, there are hundreds of complete and conscientious reports in our archives, which contain all the details necessary. Many of these are supplemented by analyses, radiographs, accounts of laboratory research, etc. They constitute models of case-taking, and some in our archives may be said to be as near perfection as is possible.

IV

The doctors who visit our Bureau each year, to examine and enquire into the subject of the cures there, may be divided into several categories.

There are, in the first place, the doctors who are believers; these are not ashamed to declare that their science cannot explain the cures of Lourdes, and do not hesitate to say that the cause must be sought higher. They are in complete accord with, and join in the thanksgiving of, the pilgrims to the Queen of Heaven for the cures granted there.

But it must not be supposed for one instant that these doctors have the faith of a charcoal-burner, and are disposed to admit supernatural facts without control or examination, that they are inclined to see the supernatural in all the cases submitted to them.

For the most part this class of doctors who visit the Bureau are exacting and severe, more so even than the indifferent and incredulous, when it is a question of affirming "a miracle."

Very often it is from the side of the believers that the most objections arise; they are usually inclined to see insufficient guarantees in the cases put before them.

Boissarie cites the case of a young doctor, who was witness of a cure, or rather of a resurrection, which had been under his care for several months.[1] It concerned a young girl whose case was deemed absolutely hopeless, but who was cured: the young doctor had all the notes of the case, and he set about writing the report of the cure. He had followed the malady from its commencement, and consequently could have no doubt. Suddenly, however, he was attacked by scruples; the memory of classical cases of the same disease returned to him, and he thought of the common belief that only nervous diseases can be the object of supernatural cures. These thoughts overcame his first impressions. He demanded more time before pronouncing on the matter. But more time meant more worry, and he became obsessed with the idea that he had not the capacity of making an impartial judgement. At the end he entrusted all the notes of the case to a friend, asking him to draw up the report according to his conscience, and not to be influenced by his first opinion.

This case reported by the two doctors is one of the fullest and most accurate that we have in our archives.

I ask again, what statistics are there based on more accurate and scrupulous reports?

[1] Boissarie, *Renaissance religieuse dans le corps médical. Annales de N. D. de Lourdes,* tome 36, p. 113.

V

Another category we welcome at the Bureau are those who do not know. Among these we sometimes meet ignorance that is truly amazing. During the month of September a few years ago a Parisian colleague presented himself. After the usual greetings he said to me: "Ever since my arrival here, the conversation seems to turn about one subject. Everybody here speaks of 'our Lady of Lourdes.' . . . This Lady of Lourdes, this Virgin they invoke, is Bernadette Soubirous, isn't it?"

But though not ignorant to this extent, a large number of doctors arrive in the little Pyrenean town without knowing exactly what passes there, and without having the least idea that close to the miraculous Grotto there is a clinic which is in some measure without parallel, and that there they can observe the most interesting and rare cases.

My own example is a proof of this statement: until I accompanied the National Pilgrimage for the first time, I was in a state of tranquil indifference, and ignorance which bordered almost on scepticism. It was without the slightest enthusiasm, and only after some hesitation, that I decided to go. It was not that I was incredulous, but I did not like crowds of people, and it seemed to me that the agitation and noisy manifestations of crowds were little in harmony with the recollection that should accompany acts of piety.

From the start, however, as a convinced Catholic, I was moved, more than I can say, at the splendid

manifestations of faith, the wonderful examples of charity, and the true fraternity that existed there. As doctor, my professional interest was soon aroused by the presence of interesting and rare cases; by these masses of sick people, in some of whom the agony seemed almost to have commenced—the whole forming a spectacle it was impossible to forget, and difficult to contemplate without emotion.

From the moment that I was introduced to Dr. Boissarie, whose friendly and cordial greeting I shall never forget, I, so to speak, scarcely left the Bureau, the existence of which up to that time I had totally ignored. There I found myself immediately in direct contact with the supernatural. My medical knowledge was completely upset by coming in contact with cases who had been previously cured, whose reports I was enabled to study at leisure, and which my good faith obliged me to conclude had been cured in a manner which passed the comprehension of human intelligence.

Since that time I have encountered many medical men who had not even heard of the Bureau, or if they had it was only vaguely, or to get false notions about it. That is why I am so keenly desirous to see the Bureau more frequented by our colleagues, so that they may make known the facts of Lourdes to the medical profession at large.

VI

Amongst our visitors there are also many *who do not believe*. Of this number there are some who arrive with their minds made up. They are abso-

lutely determined to rest where they are. They will not see or look at anything. They neither interrogate the patients nor the other doctors. It was of this variety that Dr. Lapponi said that they would not believe, even if with their own eyes they saw a man rise from the dead.

To explain the phenomena whose reality they refuse to admit, they invoke various theories—"the faith which cures," religious suggestion, etc.

The irreconcilables deny; their mind is made up, but sometimes there is evident bad faith. In their animosity the most inadequate explanations are put forward to escape the supernatural. They go so far as to have recourse to insinuations and absurd accusations, not hesitating to say that Lourdes absolutely rests on error, for Bernadette was hallucinated; it is simply a challenge made by error and commercialism to reason. "Lourdes will pass, and we shall see its ephemeral glory fade this century. This would already have happened, *if the interests* of the hotels had not been at stake."[1]

These obstinate adversaries of the supernatural are, however, sometimes very embarrassed when they are put in presence of facts which are impossible to deny. In this case, they commence by refusing all discussion, and if pushed into their last trenches, they employ arguments which are devoid of any scientific worth.

At one of the examinations in the Bureau, I had asked two colleagues to examine a patient suddenly

[1] Dr. Bonjour, cité par le Docteur J. Cement, *À propos de Lourdes.* Imprimerie St Paul, Fribourg.

cured of Pott's disease. Their conclusion was that it was absolutely impossible to explain naturally the complete disappearance of the objective and subjective symptoms detailed in the recent certificate of the doctor who had charge of the case. This certificate was most precise: it affirmed the existence of cervico-dorsal disease, described the symptoms, and cited in support the name and opinion of a well-known specialist. This very detailed certificate also expressly noted that there were no signs of hysteria about the patient, so a nervous origin of the malady could not be believed.

Following the usual course of procedure, I asked the assembled doctors if they had any observations or objections to make. One of them replied: he laid stress on the sudden disappearance of the pain, the normal muscular movement, the absence of atrophy of the muscles after such a prolonged immobilisation in plaster; keeping silence, however, about the abscess which had formed anteriorly, he maintained that the phenomena were now absolutely contrary to what one would expect. Consequently one had a right to call in question both the diagnosis made by the doctor treating the case, and also the specialist who had advised the immobilising apparatus. These doctors must have been in error. One of them *must* have made an imperfect examination; the other, the specialist on account of his speciality, saw reason *everywhere* for immobilisation!

I remarked that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, to make us doubt the good faith and competence of our colleagues, adding that a suspicion of

this sort was in complete contradiction with the rules of scientific discussion, and I suggested that it would be at least just to present these objections to the doctors who had charge of the case. All was to no purpose; the only reply was: "It is impossible. True Pott's disease *can never be cured like that.*"

In some cases, not content with denying the cure, they deny the illness. The disease had been cured for a long time, was cured when the patient came to Lourdes. The fact is that the whole affair is a comedy, in which the various scenes have been arranged in advance! The person supposed to be cured has been paid to play a part! We are, then, asked to believe that in spite of the most definite certificates, in spite of numerous witnesses absolutely worthy of credence, there is nothing after all but fraud and trumpery!

Personally, I did not know that one might simulate optic atrophy; vertebral caries, with an abscess discharging sequestra; a congenital dislocation of the hip; or a carcinoma. Our archives contain definite examples of cure of all of these.

Even if some are not so outspoken, yet they put forward an astonishing collection of insinuations. The patient in question was *perhaps* not really ill. *Without doubt* the malady was not correctly described. The cure could not *really* have taken place. Again: those examining *cannot* have pushed their investigations far enough. They *might* have been deceived. Their *religious belief* made them bad judges. The doctors of Lourdes should be held suspect, their statements *cannot be impartial.* Their

professional conscience is *too readily inclined* to see and admit the supernatural.

What is to be said for such methods of discussion? How can we qualify such arguments, when for the most part they are brought forward by those who refuse to study the question?

In every discussion on some theoretical question the sincerity of one's opponent ought to be admitted, even when the theory he advances is considered to be erroneous. We recognise the good faith of those who seek to find a natural explanation for what we consider supernatural. But we cannot allow them to support their theories in the manner of Zola, making a person die who is in good health, or declaring that someone is mad when he is quite sane. Neither can we allow the accusation of ignorance, which is so constantly made by unbelievers against us, to pass without protest, although we are thankful that they do not tax us with weakness of intellect! As a matter of fact, it is always in the name of Science or Reason that religious manifestations and sincere faith are classed as hysterical symptoms. Such people pretend with Littré "that Religion has its roots in pathology, and that Sanctity is disease."

But, God be praised, the number of conscientious doctors who study and analyse the facts, and who do not believe they have the right to consider those who do not agree with them as hallucinated, increases daily.

It is often the most cultivated intellects which seem to be struck with a species of blindness when it is a question of religious faith.

When the enemies of the supernatural are put in the presence of obvious and extraordinary facts, as they will not acknowledge them, and remain inflexible, they have to distort these facts in some way. Constantly they will not be satisfied with the proofs offered them, but always demand some more stringent. As a matter of fact, they deny *a priori* all evidence, however valid it may be, and will yield only to themselves.

Human evidence has always constituted the base on which history is built up. If the certitude based on historians worthy of credit is denied, there can be no more teaching. Now, the history of Lourdes is based upon the assertions of hundreds of authorised witnesses; the facts have occurred before their eyes, and a great number of these witnesses are still available to reaffirm their assertions. Our cures are facts to be seen, touched, *facts patent to the senses*. Consequently, they are as easy to observe as other verifiable incidents that can be verified, using the procedure and methods ordinarily made use of. The basis of all enquiry rests on faith in human testimony.

It is possible to believe without having seen personally, and one has a duty to accept witness which offers sufficient guarantees for credibility. If that is not done, one may doubt all truth, and all but personal experience. How is it, then, that the mass of evidence that we can put at the disposal of our sceptical colleagues does not excite their interest? The reason really is because there are many doctors who do not wish to open their eyes to the light. They prefer not to see themselves, for it is possible to doubt

the assertions of others, but much more difficult to deny the testimony of one's own sight and hearing.

These doctors who deny everything will have none but professional evidence. But, surely, "it is not necessary to be a tailor to see a hole in a garment," nor to be a watchmaker to know when a clock has stopped? There are numbers of cases in which non-professional evidence is beyond all cavil. The stating of a fact is within the capacity of everybody, and evidence can be given by any eyewitness. In every medical report great importance is attached to the history. This is furnished by the patient himself, by neighbours, by friends, by those who have had charge of him. All doctors who have to form an opinion on some case, have largely to use non-medical evidence when it is a case of enquiring into facts which they have not seen for themselves.

As to medical testimony, which the incredulous also deny, it is not loyal to put in doubt the diagnosis and observation of some colleague, nor to despise his opinion, before definite study of the case has been made. Admitting that at the Medical Bureau we should not be content with evidence brought forward solely by those interested in the case, and by vague and imperfect certificates, yet we have not the right to dismiss the evidence made by the doctor treating the case, who has had charge of the invalid for months or years, and observed attentively all the phases of the illness.

We see at Lourdes many unbelieving doctors. Usually they deny in a tone which admits of no reply: "I deny . . . consequently the fact does not

MLLE. CLAIRE PAQUIGNON OF PARIS AT THE BUREAU DES CONSTATATIONS, AUGUST 22, 1913.

exist, since it is *I* who deny." What right have they for this rash confidence in their own knowledge? There is no necessity to have been practising medicine for a considerable time to know that a wound does not cicatrise instantly; that a dead or dying person does not return immediately to life; that Science has never yet suddenly restored sight to the blind. But, as I have said, many incredulous doctors come to Lourdes with the firm belief that "a miracle is impossible," and nothing can make them forsake this belief.

VII

Another category of doctors visiting the Bureau arrive not only with the determination not to be convinced, but they *flee* from the light. They are dazzled by the evidence, but they kick against expressing the truth. They pretend to seek for light, whilst all the time they are voluntarily keeping in the shade. They tremble at being forced to accept a miracle, which after all may be possible. They do not wish to examine thoroughly; they stop in the middle of the road, pretend to search, but after having said, "Who knows?" they add, "I do not see." They have neither the strength of character nor the courage to concentrate their mind on what is put before them. Then they wish to appear indifferent, disinterested, although in reality they are deeply impressed. They prefer to talk of something else, hoping in this manner to rid themselves of hesitation and doubt by forgetfulness and indifference. "After all, this question is not worth so much trouble," they declare as they

quit the Bureau, confused at not knowing and not being able to come to a decision.

Human nature is, however, definitely drawn to make a choice between yes and no, truth and error. It is a real need for our reasoning faculties. Why is it, then, that these doctors go away uncertain and undecided between belief and doubt? The reason is that a conscientious choice means the acceptance of definite consequences, it implies taking a definite side in the battle; neutrality is very much easier.

Truth is at times very embarrassing when it compels us to change our habits.

VIII

Some sceptical colleagues, however, arrive at Lourdes with the firm intention of ascertaining for themselves what takes place at the Grotto. They have determined to observe and study the facts loyally, and then to come to a *conscientious conclusion.*

Men of this calibre, when they are present at some striking cure, are at first dumbfounded. They do not make that common pleasantry: "He is cured, so much the better for him"; but, after having struggled and protested in the name of Science, they have the necessary courage and candour to recognise that the fact is perfectly obvious and definite. There is certain evidence, and they avow that the extraordinary phenomena they have seen cannot be explained by any human science.

During the National Pilgrimage of 1913, in the

MLLE. CLAIRE PAQUIGNON (AFTER CURE).

place of honour that is reserved for the doctors immediately behind the canopy under which the Blessed Sacrament is carried by the Bishop, I saw suddenly, about twenty-five yards away along the rank of stretcher cases, the apparition of a young girl moving out very slowly from amongst the kneeling crowd; her hair all disordered, clad only in her night garments, she held her arms crosswise, and big tears rolled down her cheeks as the words, "My God! my God!" escaped from her lips.

This was Mademoiselle Claire Paquignon, of Paris, who had risen from her sick-bed. I had remarked her only that morning at the Grotto, and her almost moribund appearance had excited my pity.

Soon after I found this young girl at the Medical Bureau; I was present at all the different phases of her examination, took part in them myself, and learnt that Mademoiselle Paquignon had been attacked by tuberculosis four years previously, and had undergone two severe operations, made by Dr. Lerey, surgeon on the staff of St. Joseph's Hospital. These two interventions seemed at first to have some measure of success, but the general state of the patient remained very precarious. One may remove diseased organs, but as yet the operation of removing the peritoneum has not been performed. This membrane was now involved by a very severe form of tuberculosis, against which measures were adopted in vain by Drs. Lesage and Villechauvais, of Paris, from February to August, 1913. The main symptoms were continuous fever, great pain, intractable vomiting, and *repeated collections of pus*. Dr. Villechauvais declared that

to undertake the journey to Lourdes in such a condition would mean certain death.

She departed, however, and I have just recounted how she got up and was radically and suddenly cured at the passage of the Blessed Sacrament. At the Medical Bureau it was recognised that all the abdominal lesions had disappeared absolutely, nor was there sign of tubercle elsewhere. I was present also at the interesting and touching meeting between Claire Paquignon and Dr. Lesage. He arrived at Lourdes on the day following the cure. When he arrived in the presence of the patient, whom he had seen but three days before in an almost dying condition, he could not contain his emotion, and, with his eyes full of tears, could only stammer out the two words: "Oh, Mademoiselle!"

Well, during the examination I found myself in close proximity to Dr. C——, of Niort. I could see that he had been much astonished and moved at this surprising case, which we had direct evidence of, as also at the details given by Dr. Lesage. Suddenly he turned with a smile to another doctor, a professor of the School of Medicine at Nantes, who had also been present, and made an avowal of his scepticism. The opinion of both was: "Certainly we are present at an extraordinary event! but it can be transitory only, an amelioration produced by the great desire for a cure combined with an emotional nervous shock experienced on the Esplanade. The illness will soon recommence; for, *humanly* speaking, it is absolutely impossible to cure such a condition." But the disease has not returned.

Dr. C—— became more and more interested; he visited the Bureau each of the four following days, returning night and morning to find each time manifest progress, which augmented daily. He was present at the rapid return to health, appetite, strength, colour, and he saw the young girl leave on the fourth day with all the appearance of advanced convalescence.

Our colleague, loyal though sceptical, was convinced of his error. He frankly acknowledged it. Giving his impressions to a journal—*La Revue de l'Ouest*—he terminated his article as follows:

"The fact is there, inexplicable but real. There are no means of escaping from it by talking of nervous phenomena! Mademoiselle Paquignon arrived at Lourdes by the White Train on August 21, suffering from tuberculous peritonitis in its last stages. She left Lourdes on August 25 with all the appearances of a rapid and complete cure. I saw her myself, and there is no denying the fact.

"I shall correspond with my colleague in Paris who had medical charge of Mademoiselle Paquignon. If the illness returns I shall announce the fact."

I may add that the illness has not returned, at any rate for nine years. I often see Mademoiselle Paquignon. She is a young, healthy-looking, fresh-complexioned girl, full of energy.

IX

There are some unbelieving doctors who are less prompt to accept the supernatural, and have many

difficulties to overcome before they avow themselves convinced.

To begin with, they usually do not give much attention to the enquiries of the Medical Bureau. They commence by listening somewhat distractedly to what is told them. It is not long, however, before they begin to be somewhat astonished on seeing the cures which have been obtained in organic diseases and not amongst hysterical cases. Their interest is aroused and gradually increases. They scrutinise more closely, thinking that certainly they are in the presence of something in the way of trickery or conjuring. Then they finish by realising that their senses are not deceiving them, that all takes place openly at Lourdes in the great clinic of the supernatural. They recognise now, in spite of themselves, that facts do occur which are in opposition to the laws of Nature; that these facts—and this is a great point with them—are examined and controlled in their presence by other medical men, often atheists and as sceptical as themselves. Finally, as it is necessary either to deny and give evidence of the most marked disloyalty, or to admit the supernatural, they range themselves on the side of evidence and truth.

One morning a capable young doctor presented himself at the Bureau. When asked for his card, he stood rather on his dignity and replied: "It is not worth the trouble, for I do not believe all these tales." No insistence was made, little attention was paid to him, and he remained in a corner somewhat isolated. He was present at the arrival of several people who said that they were better or cured, and he saw the

doctors present give their opinions, interrogate the patient, strictly analyse the facts, and sum up as they seemed to indicate.

Old "miraculés" came in, recounted their case, and claimed to be noted again. He laughed at the recital of some of these privileged people, scarcely believing that the individual there so smiling and gay was once a case abandoned by Science; but he could find the report, examine all its pathological details, witnesses, facts, etc.—all were to be found there! Then more or less unconsciously he began to interest himself in "these tales." After a time he went out quietly, but deep in thought. The afternoon of that same day, he again entered the Bureau, but this time card in hand, and addressing the Secretary, said: "Colleague, I am an imbecile; please do me the honour to take my card."

From that day the doctor in question has rarely passed a year without coming to take part in our work, and has become one of our most faithful and assiduous helpers.

X

Finally there are unbelieving members of the profession who are absolutely "bowled over" by the evidence of some fact outside the laws of Nature that they have witnessed, and they surrender without resistance. The veil which obscured their sight seems, as it were, to be torn away by the force of the truth, and a light which is sudden and dazzling streams in upon them.

During one of the recent big pilgrimages, one of our

colleagues, who comes each year to give us his help and assistance, encountered on the Rosary Esplanade a fellow-student whom he had not seen for several years. Very pleased with this encounter, he asked his friend to accompany him to the Bureau, but he soon perceived that the latter, an absolute sceptic, was not at all disposed to take the Bureau seriously. At the definite invitation which was addressed to him, he replied in a railing tone: "What do you wish me to do there? I know exactly what occurs. I should see three or four doctors . . . somewhat behind the times . . . pontificate, and register pretended cures of hysterical women. That sort of thing does not interest me one little bit."

After having explained how things were conducted at the Bureau, and having tried to convince him without success that the examinations at this clinic were serious and very interesting, by quoting finally some definite cases, he managed to persuade his friend to enter the room reserved for the doctors.

There he was surprised to find about twenty doctors, who seemed to him by no means "behind the times"—on the contrary, very much up to date—who mutually gave their impressions and opinions of various cases, and pulled diagnoses to pieces.

The boredom that he had hidden on entering with a somewhat sarcastic smile soon gave place to a certain confidence. He saw around him doctors of all kinds of opinions, even freethinkers and Protestants, who came and went in an atmosphere that was quite scientific. Certainly he had not been introduced into a *sacristy*, as he had rather feared. Affairs passed

normally and straightforwardly, and one found oneself quite at ease in a sympathetic atmosphere. The doctors attached to the Bureau neither tried to influence their colleagues nor to impose upon them their own opinions. They did not even speak of the miraculous. Could it be, after all, that his friend was right?

Just at this moment, however, a young girl was brought to the Bureau, who had got up from her stretcher in front of the Grotto, and who said that she was suddenly cured of vertebral caries with complete paraplegia; her report contained a very detailed account, together with the certificate of a well-known professor of the Faculty of Paris, under whose treatment she had been in hospital for two years.

The diagnosis made by such a well-known man produced considerable impression on the assembly, for it could not be called in doubt. The reality of the cure, as complete as it was sudden, could not be denied. The interrogation of the patient, examination of the certificates, witnesses, etc., all took place before the assembled doctors. The examination of the patient, undertaken by five doctors, lasted more than an hour. Then, according to the usual mode of procedure, the report which had been drawn up by the examining doctors was read out at the assembly. At the question, "Can the sudden and absolute cure be attributed to a natural process?" all the doctors present, including the incredulous practitioner, answered in the negative.

When the meeting was over, the sarcastic smile with which the sceptic had accepted the invitation to

examine for himself had given place to interest and emotion. To the questions of his friend on his first impressions, he replied: "There is no doubt. God alone could act so rapidly." At the door of the Bureau he said: "I was delighted with what I saw; I would not have given up my place for an empire."

Soon after he announced to his wife his intention of staying a little longer at Lourdes, in order to continue his collaboration in the interesting work of the Medical Bureau.

XI

Medical men of various religious beliefs—Protestants, Jews, etc.—are not exempt from the attraction which draws so many to Lourdes. Every year our register gives the names of doctors not belonging to the Catholic Faith, and they take not a little interest in the proceedings of the Bureau.

But all doctors do not come solely with the view of studying the cases. A large number exist who come to Lourdes as pilgrims. They are led there, it may be, to return thanks to our Lady for graces received, or to demand a cure for themselves or for some member of their family. A colleague in New York, introducing his young son to Dr. Boissarie at Lourdes, sent with him the following lines written by himself, lines somewhat surprising to come from the pen of a doctor: "My son, in the state of weakness in which he is now, joined to the uncertainty as to his future, turns for help to our Lady of Lourdes. The supernatural is there—the supernatural which can cure him and restore him to health. The pilgrimage he is

undertaking will show him to be submissive to God's will, and seeking in all things his glory. He believes, we believe. Mary immaculate, pray for us, who have recourse to thee." Signed: Dr. Archambault-Lassalhe.[1]

Another doctor, whose child was blind, wrote to the President of the Bureau: "I have come twice this winter from Ireland. I shall return a third time, for Lourdes only can cure my child."

Again, another example: "I have nothing to expect from medicine. . . . I come to ask my cure from the blessed Virgin; and if I do not obtain it, resignation and submission to the will of God."

In recent years I have often seen medical men without any ostentation come on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, and speak with grateful hearts of their gratitude and veneration for our Lady of Lourdes.

[1] Boissarie, *L'Œuvre de Lourdes*, p. 38.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

PERHAPS from what I have said the conclusion may be drawn that even the most exacting may find that Lourdes offers the medical profession a subject for study, a clinic of great interest, and to all, motives for venerating God, the all-powerful Creator.

My design will have been attained if I have induced some to study the question more thoroughly, and to turn their minds to these truths, which so far are insufficiently known. I shall be well satisfied if I have succeeded in arousing in the souls of some indifferent or sceptical members of the profession the desire to investigate more thoroughly a problem which places us in the presence of the supernatural.

To people of good-will, and those who vaguely know that surprising things do occur, I say: Come to Lourdes; enquire, examine, see all the imposing manifestations of charity, which frequently touch the most hardened. You will find in the vicinity of the Grotto everything capable of satisfying a legitimate curiosity. You will learn things, perhaps until now unsuspected, which will open your eyes and conduct you infallibly to Catholic belief. If you suffer in body, you will be perhaps cured or relieved. If it is your soul that is diseased in some respect, you will always find the divine Healer.

To my colleagues who are loyal and sincere in their search for truth, I address myself with confidence

and say: In the place of feigning ignorance as to the extraordinary marvels that undoubtedly do occur at Lourdes, instead of treating them with derision or denying them . . . *from a distance*, would it not be much more reasonable, interesting, and logical to adopt the same attitude that you do with regard to your scientific studies? Is it not preferable to go and study *on the spot*, *to investigate* in the Bureau itself, the questions that we put openly and straightforwardly before all the doctors present?

Come to Lourdes during the time of the great pilgrimages. Come *then* to the Medical Bureau. You will find yourself absolutely at home. You will receive the fraternal welcome which is given to all; will encounter many other practitioners, sincere and loyal in their intentions. You will be cordially invited to take part in this interesting work; will participate in the examinations and enquiries, where all possible objections are brought forward and openly discussed.

I cannot promise that you will see an exceptional case, for the cures do not take place according to our wish or desire. You can, however, pick out from our archives the particular case you would like to enquire about, and continue your researches as far and for as long as you like.

Supposing that you consider that our examinations are insufficient, that our methods leave something to be desired, that you think such and such a system of investigation should be employed—then tell us so, nobody will make difficulties or objections.

If God should permit that you are present at the

Bureau at some cure which is absolutely inexplicable (and you stand every chance of encountering such), then I ask that you will not shut your eyes to the light.

In every case I believe that all will have the intimate conviction that everything passes openly and honestly, that all the enquiries are conducted systematically and with the greatest care.

I have also complete confidence that after having come in contact with the supernatural, you will leave Lourdes with the belief that the facts there are worthy the attention of every cultivated man of good faith, and that the supreme object of the Bureau tends to one sole end :

Search for the Truth, and through the knowledge of the Truth, the spread of greater honour and devotion to the IMMACULATE VIRGIN.

PARIS, *February* 11, 1922.

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